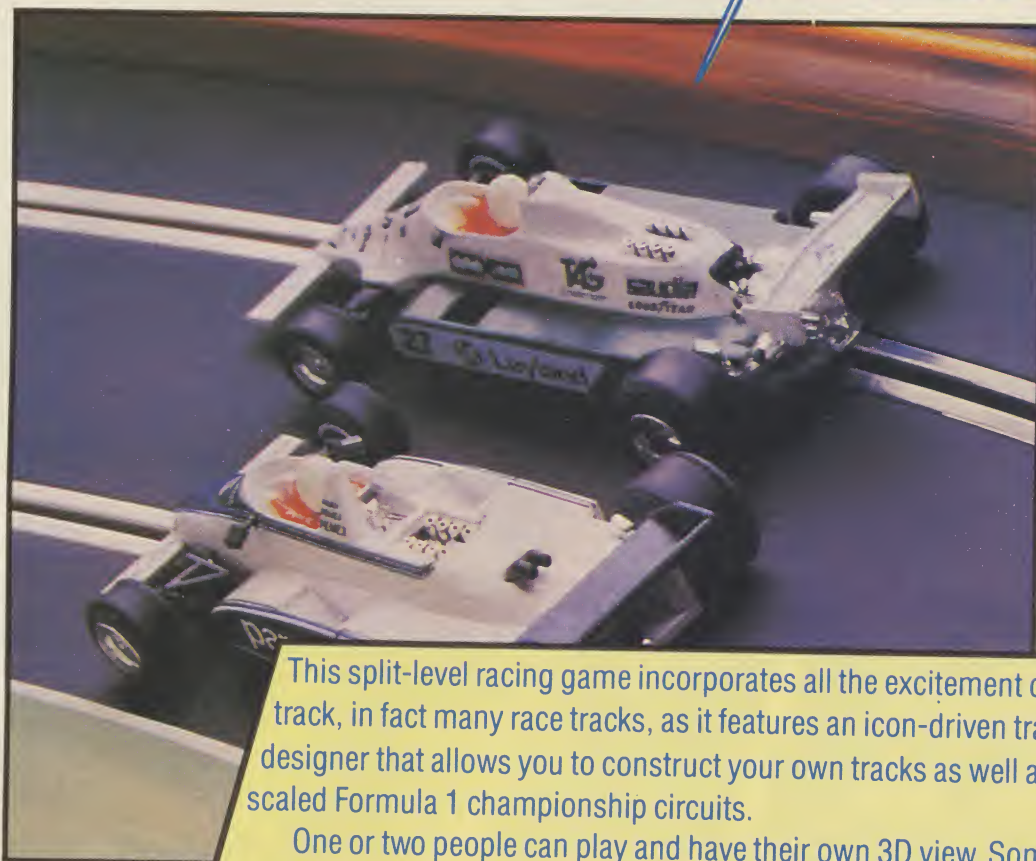


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PLAYING TIPS

DRUID TIPS

Another massive wad of tips and maps arrived at CRASH Towers from The Mega Team of Tipsters from Stoke On Trent. These talented but largely anonymous lads (or maybe even ladettes) have now cracked FIREBIRD'S *Druid* and have sent me a very passable map with these tips to accompany it. But am I ever going to know who you are? Hmm? Yep? Ho?

Certain weapons work better on certain creatures in *Druid*. For the Ghosts, use water or fire. One hit will usually finish them off. The skeletons don't really like water. One hit with this will kill them. However, if you're using other weapons it will take three hits to finish them off. The Beetle hates fire and one hit with it will add to its hasty demise. Other weapons take three hits to kill it. Snakes also hate fire (three hits for other weapons). The odd Wraith or two have the same dislike of firey substances but as with all the other creatures they take three blasts with any other weapon. Rallacks hate water (one hit) and the Devil (eek) hates electricity (one hit as well). Those nasty Slimies hate fire but take two hits and three of anything else.

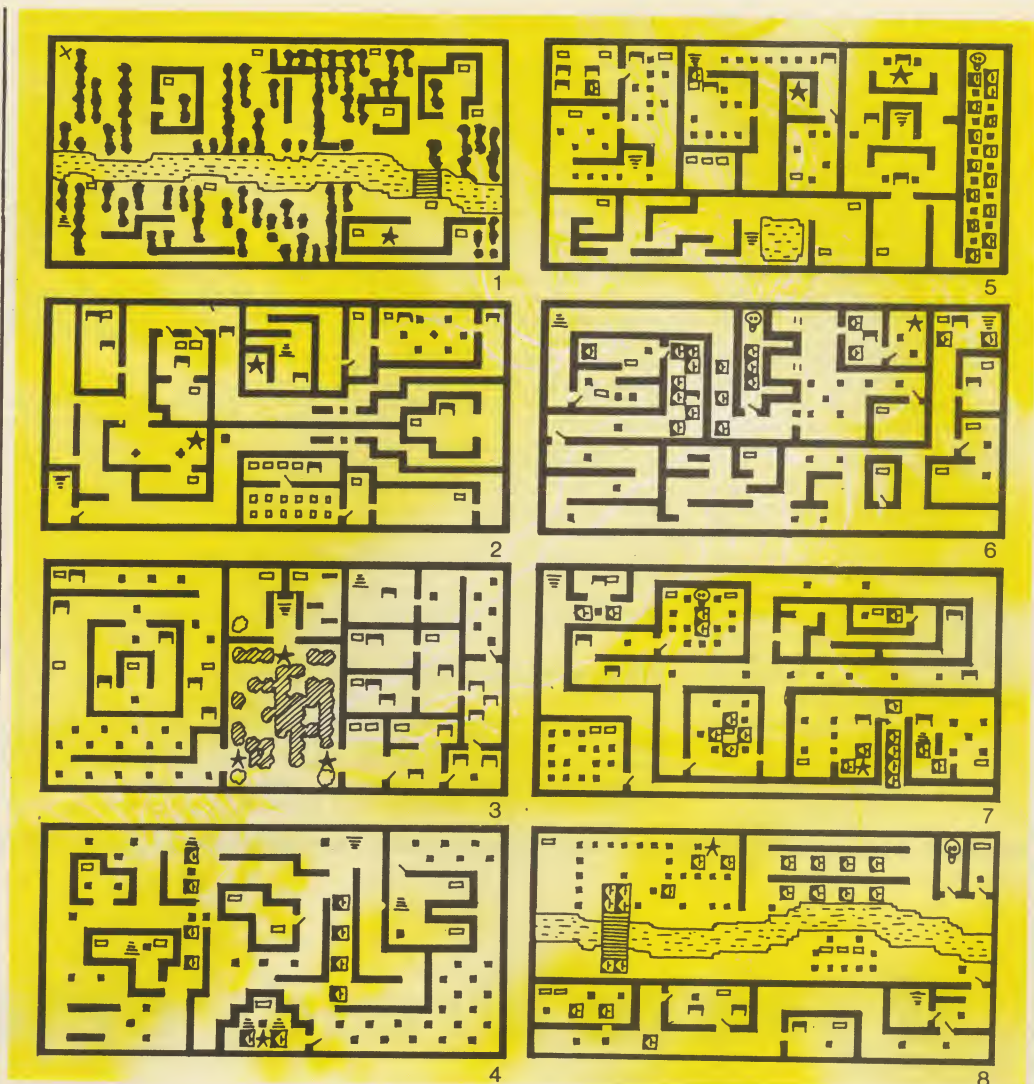
To get through the swamps on level three and over large areas of Vampire faces it is much easier to use a Chaos spell. To complete the game you will need as many chests as possible and don't just hare off to the nearest exit. Golem is of greatest use on levels six and eight, but he will follow you from level six into level seven. Get as many keys and Chaos spells as possible. The ratings in the game so you know what to aim for are: Halfwit, Apprentice, Acolyte, Seer, Lore Seekers, Spirit Master, Potion Master and finally the greatest accolade of all, Light Master.

DRUID TIPS

Hot from the pen of Sean Murphy from Harrow are these tips for the first three levels of *Druid*.

LEVEL ONE

Before you cross the river on the first level it is safe to use water on your enemies. However, after you've crossed it you must use fire because most of your assailants will be beetles. save your Golem for level two because he's needed



a bit more here.

LEVEL TWO

Open the door with the key and go up and then right. Here you will find a holy pentagram to restore energy. Beware of yellow squares—they are very deadly. Use your Golem right at the beginning of the level so as to save on as much energy as possible because there's a mean section later on...

LEVEL THREE

Go right and up to the first chest and then go back and do the same but to the left this time. You will see a mass of blue thingummies

and *must* use the chaos spell in order to get across it. Once you're across this you will see two more Pentagrams which will very kindly restore your lost energy.

Mr Murphy reckons he's actually got further in the game than his tips suggest, but I think he's bluffing, so lets see the rest of the levels, Sean!

DRUID CHEAT

It says on the inlay of *Druid* by FIREBIRD that the Golem cannot be controlled manually by a second player. But, Peter Ellison

from Cheshire has found a way around this.

Set the control to Kempston and then begin the game. Find a Golem spell and cast it. Pause the game and "A KEY" will be displayed at the top right hand side of the screen. Press "P" and instead, "Joystick" will be printed. Now unpause the game. The Druid can now be controlled with the keys and the Golem can be controlled with the joystick. However, the golem cannot now go onto another level without reversing the procedure above and getting it to "follow".

BREAKTHRU BUG

If you've bought *Breakthru* by US Gold then you'll already know about this blatant bug. When the game was loaded up in the CRASH office to be reviewed everyone discovered the bug after about 30 seconds of first playing the game. No-one could believe it when we found out that it wasn't a pre-production copy

and was actually a finished game. If you've read the review this issue then you'll be wise to this little gem. When you first start playing the game press the jump key and you'll find that you can leap and sproing through the entire game, even over water and through thin air right to the end and all the nasty men with tanks will have no effect on you whatsoever! You don't score any points, though.

THANATOS TIPS

Robert Whitcombe from Hatfield Heath in Essex has sent in some starter tips for Durell's latest CRASH SMASH, *Thanatos*. The game features a nasty dragon who rampages around looking for Virgins to eat and mayhem to wreck on anybody who comes into this path. In case anybody's having severe problems with getting started these tips should

come in very handy.

One of the first hazzards for *Thanatos* to encounter is the creepy cave. Falling rocks must be dodged to help the dragon stay intact. Once out of the cave you can concentrate on hassling the natives. The humans can be picked up and hurled to their death from a great height. Knights can be plucked off their horses and the horses then used to crush them. Great fun! However, the townsfolk

will retaliate by hurling rocks and javelins at *Thanatos*. Green rocks can be plucked from the ground (there is quite a technique to this: fly as low as you can so that *Thanatos*' paws are actually touching the rocks. He will now pick them up). These rocks can be dropped on the people to kill them.

Next you will come to a stretch of water. Over the water is a door. Stomp up to this and blast away with your fiery breath. After a short while the door will disintegrate and you will be able to pass through. Over the next stretch of people you will see a green woman. Avoiding the spears and other nasty objects which are being thrown at you, land and the woman will run up and jump on *Thanatos*'s neck.

After more people and a small cave is a section with very large and deadly bees. These are quite tricky to get through. If your dragon's heart is still beating after this buzzing onslaught you'll come to another stretch of water. Fly right to the top of the screen. Don't go downwards or else a big and nasty sea monster will rise up and get yer. Keep going over more bees are more people until you reach a cave full of spiders. If *Thanatos* can manage to land, some white spiders will appear. These can be picked up and dropped. Eugh.

Keep going and when you get to a door half burn it down and at the last moment run back out of the fire and you'll see a girlie tied to a stake. However, a galant knight is on hand to protect her. Follow him and pluck him off his mount and drop him. If you're feeling particularly vindictive you can also pick up his horse and drop that too! Now walk up to the girlie and eat her (how rotten). Your energy will now go up because you've eaten and your tummy is nice and full. Happy tum makes a happy dragon, you know.

Go back to the gate and walk through it. Fly onwards and you'll see a spell book. Land and the girlie on your back will go and get it, but be careful because she can be killed. Keep flying until you see the edge of the castle. Here, a two headed dragon is waiting for you. destroy him and you'll eventually come to a cauldron. And that's as far as Robert's got.

Next issue there may be more tips, but only if anyone's got that far!

TRAPDOOR TIPS

I don't know what it is about *Stoke On Trent*, but it certainly seems to be the centre of the *Tipping Universe* if the number of letters I receive from that part

of the world is anything to go by. Andrew Williams and Jaz Bentley from *Stoke* have sent me a very pretty and informative booklett all about Berk's trials and tribulations in the game *Trapdoor*. Last month there were some tips on how to get a Can of Worms and Crushed Eyeballs. Anyway mon leetle frenchipoo chefs, thees munth's leetle delicasee for you to savour is a leetle something called *Les Oeufs Saute* or as Berk would say, *Fried Eggs*. Anyway, eneouf of this yolking and oeuf with the tips. Chuckle.

Put the frying pan onto the stove in room 4 before you start making the can of worms. By the time your Great and Wobbly master asks for them the pan will be nice and hot. Get the bullet from room two and drop it in room three, but not on the trapdoor. Open the trap door and wait until a purple nasty pops its head out. slam it quickly before anything else can come out. Once the Egg Bird has been let loose, put the bullet on the Trap Door and wait until the bird comes close. Then, open the door and up whizzes the bullet, straight up the poor bird's parson's nose (eowch) and watch those eyes bulge.

Shut the trapdoor quickly or the bullet will go plummeting back

down it. If you do loose the bullet in this way, fear not according to Andrew and Jarrod, drutt or boni (?) can be used and even worms will work providing your timing is right. Once the bird's eyes start to bulge get the pan and put it underneath the bird. So shocked is the bird at having various objects shot up various private parts of it's anatomy that it will lay an egg in the pan.

Repeat this process until the bird wants to go back down the trap door (don't blame it). Once it's gone put the eggs on the stove. They cook pretty quickly but wait until the pan flashes red. Wait a few seconds before picking it up or else Berk will drop it because it's so hot. Put the pan on the dumb waiter and send it to 'im upstairs to receive a hefty bonus.

To make the Boiled Slimies, go down to the cellar. When you see a pair of eyes pop up out of the water pick them up and a 'orrible slimy body will be attached to them. Drop it in the beaker which should have been fetched from room two and put in the cellar. Repeat the process until four icky, yucky slimies are squirming in your beaker.

Pick up the beaker and go up into room 5 (the room with the weight in it). Go to the far right and pull the lever until the weight is fully

If you're already elite . . .
there can only be
one more challenge.



 **KONAMI**

raised you must have dropped the beaker to do this). Pick up the beaker and go into room 4 the one with the stove. Climb the stairs until you reach the top then turn around and tip the slimies into the cauldron below.

Go down the stairs and drop the beaker. Push the cauldron down the stairs to the very bottom of the screen and then position it so that the right hand corner is not past the end of the dumb waiter. The cauldron should now be close to the right hand bottom edge of the screen. Now go into room three and open the trapdoor. If a little green head pops out, leave it open, if not then slam it quickly.

Once the mobile heater is out, close the trap door and go to the side of the cauldron. Wait until the nasty stops turning, then push up and get out of the way of his fire. The cauldron should now start smoking. Repeat the process five or six times then move into room five (where the weight is). Move onto the bottom right hand corner then up the step. The weight should crush the nasty, if not try again. When the little heater is dead (ahh) put the cauldron onto the dumb waiter and send up the boiled slimies to 'im upstairs.

If you're on the super berk level then when you've prepared all the delicacies for 'im upstairs berk must tidy everything up which means chucking everything down the trapdoor. And that's all there is to it!. When he has done this a safe will appear. If the weight is dropped on this it will break open.

OLLIE AND LISSA POKES

Those Hackers from Haxby and Pocklington are being really overly industrious this month. Must be all the Christmas spirit floating about (slurp). Anyway, here are some POKES for Ollie and Lissa to go with the tips printed last month. No tips this month I'm afraid, so you'll have to wait until the February issue in the brand, spanking New Year. Cooo.

```
5 REM OLLIE AND LISSA POKES
10 REM C SMITH J BEAN D
AUSTIN
20 CLEAR 65535
30 LET TOT=0
40 FOR f=50000 TO 50087
50 READ a: LET TOT=TOT+a
60 POKE f,a: NEXT f
70 IF TOT <> 8373 THEN PRINT
"WHOOPS": STOP
80 PRINT #1; AT 1,7; "START
OLLIE TAPE"
90 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
1000 DATA 205,86,5,221,33
1010 DATA 202,92,17,255,255
1020 DATA 62,255,55,205,86
1030 DATA 5,33,126,195,17
1040 DATA 21,93,1,14,0
1050 DATA 237,176,33,140,195
1060 DATA 17,0,250,1,29
```

```
1070 DATA 0,237,176,62,195
1080 DATA 50,42,93,195,247
1090 DATA 92,49,0,0,33
1100 DATA 0,250,229,0,0
1110 DATA 0,0,0,0,0
1120 DATA 33,0,0,175,34
1130 DATA 39,134,34,9,135
1140 DATA 34,219,134,50,41
1150 DATA 134,50,221,134,50
1160 DATA 11,135,49,120,230
1170 DATA 195,176,230
```

OLLIE AND LISSA CHEAT

To go with the routine for infinite lives is for Ollie and Lissa this issue, here's a cute little cheat for the game. Press PORTCUL after the menu choice and you will find that Ollie can now zoom around the screen like a cute furry animal possessed. This, naturally, makes things a whole lot easier when playing the game. Thanks must go to Darren Martin and Kevin Gale who live in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.

FROST BYTE POKES

The Hackers from Haxby are certainly proving to be both Formidable and Industrious. In fact I would almost go as far as saying that they're the hardest working tippers who write to me. But I won't because I'd hate to be called a creep. The Yorkshire Wonders' latest contribution is infinite lives and infinite twang time for MIKROGEN'S Frost Byte. These will come is especially useful for all those lazy people who can't be bothered to use the tips also printed this month. After you, lads...

```
10 REM C SMITH J BEAN D
AUSTIN
20 REM FROST BYTE POKES
30 LET TOT=0
40 FOR f=50000 TO 50080
50 READ a: LET TOT=TOT+a
60 POKE f,a: NEXT f
70 IF TOT <> 9111 THEN PRINT
"ERROR IN DATA": BEEP 1,1:
STOP
80 PRINT #1; AT 1,7; "START
FROSTY TAPE"
90 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
1000 DATA 205, 86, 5, 221, 33
1010 DATA 202, 92, 17, 255, 255
1011 DATA 62, 255, 55, 205, 86
1012 DATA 5, 243, 49, 0, 128
1013 DATA 33, 197, 93, 17, 70
1014 DATA 254, 1, 230, 0, 237
1015 DATA 176, 175, 50, 9, 255
1016 DATA 50, 151, 254, 50, 227
1017 DATA 254, 33, 8, 191, 34
1018 DATA 75, 254, 33, 144, 195
1019 DATA 17, 33, 255, 1, 53
1020 DATA 0, 237, 176, 49, 0
1021 DATA 0, 195, 70, 254, 0
1022 DATA 62, 176, 50, 13, 132
1023 DATA 50, 14, 132, 62, 37
1024 DATA 50, 208, 142, 195, 148
1025 DATA 91
```

LIGHTFORCE TIPS

Last month I printed some tips to get you through the first two sections of GARGOYLE'S latest CRASH SMASH, Lightforce. And as promised here's the solution to get you through the Orbital Platforms and the Ice Planet. Once again these tips come from The Mega Team from Stoke On Trent because no-one else has sent in any tips for the last two levels of the game. Shame on you! Anyway, thanks lads and off we go again. Don't forget to use the tips from last month as reference or these tips won't make any sense.

THE ORBITAL PLATFORMS

- 1) Shootable asteroids
 - (i) Stay in the middle as the asteroids subside. Shoot as many of the six as possible and be careful as these aliens will eventually become low enough to hit you
 - (ii) Same as (b), (i) See alien formation B on the Asteroid belt
 - (iii) Same as (b), (ii) Asteroid Belt, but move to the left of the screen
 - (iv) Destroy the descending aliens and move a little further to the left to take out the remaining three aliens as they come down, following the circle, move to the right of the screen immediately
 - (v) Same as (iv) but move right instead of left
 - (vi) Same as (i)
- 3) Unshootable Asteroid
 - 4) Two sets of different homing aliens (use weave technique). When you come to the life locator, shoot the middle two away and continue shooting the homers through the gap as the other platforms get in the way of your missiles if you're not careful.
 - 5) Alien Formation (f)

- (i) Move to the left of the screen, shooting. Step up to avoid any stray aliens that reach the bottom-move to the right!
- (ii) Same as (e) (v)
- (iii) Same as (i) only move to the right instead of the left - move left!
- (iv) Same as (ii) but move to the left

6) Shootable aliens

- 7) Alien Formation (g)
 - (i) Stay at the bottom, shooting
 - (ii) Same as above, just inverted left to right

8) Unshootable asteroids

9) Shootable asteroids

- 10) Alien Formation (h)
 - (i) Move to middle, shoot as many as you dare, then move to the right and hop up to avoid stray homing aliens

11) Homing spheres

- 12) Alien Formation (i)
 - (i) Same as (e)-(i)
 - (ii) Same as (f)-(i)
 - (iii) Same as (g)-(i) and move to right!
 - (iv) Same as (E)-(v)

13) Shootable asteroids

- 14) Alien Formation (j)
 - (i) Same as (g)-(i)
 - (ii) Same as (e)-(i)
 - (iii) Same as (h)-(i)

15) Homing Spheres

16) Shootable Asteroids

ICE PLANET

This is the same as the jungle planet, only with different alien graphics. Use the exactly the same strategies. Generally try to shoot as many of the ground installation as you can. Initially use these tips by using the pause key (u) in between each numbered section.

I notice that C&VG have been kind enough to mention me in their pamphlet again this month. It's the age old story I'm afraid. Apparently I don't exist and dear old Melissa does. Ho, hum. Anyway C&VG, as you obviously read my Tips page, you will be pleased to learn that the Doc Martened Publishing Executive and I will be journeying to London and paying a visit to the offices of C&VG to clear this sad matter up once and for all. We will make an appointment to see Ravingdrain and I will personally stick a Girlie Tipster sticker on her furrowed brow if indeed it even exists — along with one of your own Bug Hunter stickers. We'll then claim our prizes for the wackiest use of your stickers.

If, of course, Melissa doesn't exist (yawn) then I will stick the gummy articles on Tim Metcalf's forehead instead. In fact we are prepared to visit C&VG any time at her convenience so anxious are we to meet her! Whenever you're free Melissa, just let us know, it's up to you! So just name the date and we'll be there — tell us which day you're NOT having off in January! Of course there'll be photographic evidence to document our visit which will be printed in CRASH in due course. Eowch! Sorry, just had to pinch myself to make sure I was still here!

That's it. The last Tips of 1986. I hope you will continue to send in your maps, POKES and tips in the same quantity in 1987. All that remains is for me to wish you a very Merry Christmas and see you in the New Year. Keep those tips pouring in to: HANNAH SMITH (A VERY FESTIVE GIRLIE TIPSTER), CRASH PLAYING TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



Fairlight

Chronicles of the Land of Fairlight
2. Trail of Darkness



THE EDGE

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**Crash
Competition**



**20 SPEEDKING
JOYSTICKS
FOR RUNNERS UP**

WIN AN OPUS DISK DRIVE AND A PRINTER

KONIX are not a company well known for their fabulous games. This is not overly surprising, as they have made their name by helping everyone to play games and get bigger and better scores with the KONIX joystick range. Now they are celebrating the success of their microswitch joystick — the KONIX Speedking — which is shaped to fit the palm of your hand. No more unsightly blisters and throbbing thumbs thanks to its ergonomic lines.

The KONIX stick is one of the best you can buy, so far as I can see. I never get a chance to have anything but the worst in just about everything. Take clothes for example. All the joystick-pumping pramnets at the Towers clothe themselves in the latest up-to-the-minute Designer computer-junkie wear — they sport the very latest logos. Just look at Ben Stone, for instance! The most up to date T-Shirt that I have lurking at the back of my wardrobe is a *Tingah and Mabel* Fan Club shirt that Auntie Mabel gave to me. (She didn't want to wear it herself and give her age away.)

What I could do with is a T-Shirt logo that would be envy of all my

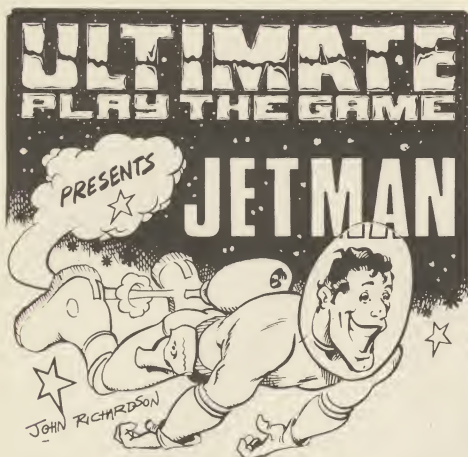
friends. Something that I could wear on a shirt around the office — I'd be the only person in the Towers wearing Designer minion clothes...

Unfortunately, I have very few ideas myself and not being blessed with the same kind of fashion sense as the other office trendies, I'm going to leave the hard work to you. Design a T-Shirt logo for me, and I might manage to persuade Oli to paint it onto a garment. Then I'd be Mr Fashionable! If your entry sews up the first prize you'll be the proud owner of an opus Disk Drive, a printer and your very own KONIX Speedking joystick. Twenty runners-up collect a Speedking blisster-reducing joystick to make game-playing in '87 that much easier on the hands...

Put your designs for the ultimate in minionesque wear onto an A4 piece of paper and send it off with the jolly old GPO to arrive here by the 20th of January 1987. Don't forget to put your name and address on the back of your entry and our name and address on the front of the envelope which is:

**TRENDIFY A MINION, CRASH
Towers, PO Box 10, Ludlow,
Shropshire SY8 1DB.**





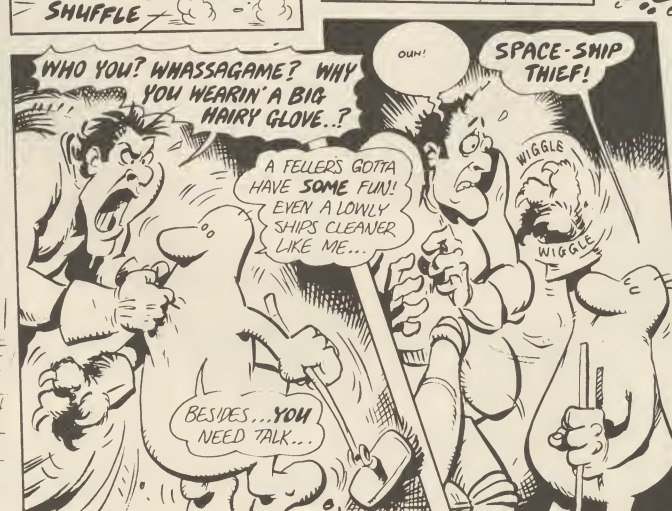
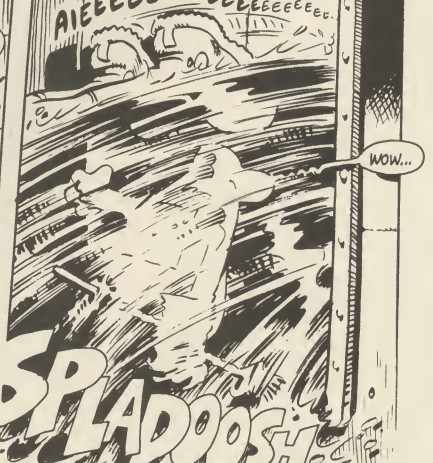
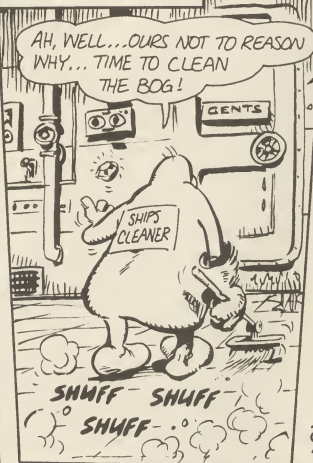
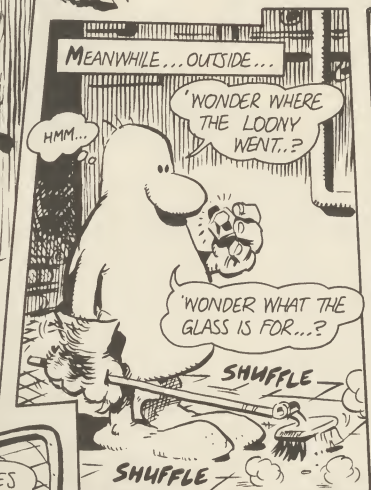
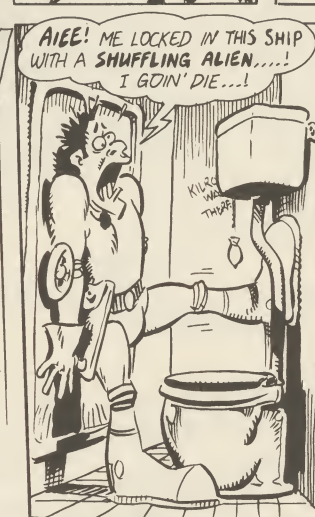
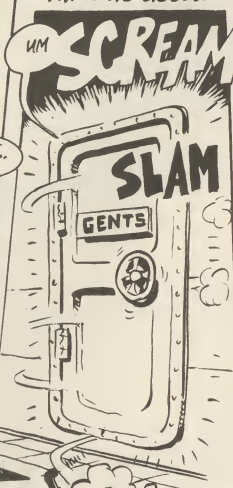
HAVING ESCAPED FROM HIS CAPTORS, OUR HERO WAS JUST ABOUT TO LOOK INTO THE FUTURE, THROUGH THE EYE OF OKTUP, WHEN A BIG, Hairy CLAW DONE TOOK IT...

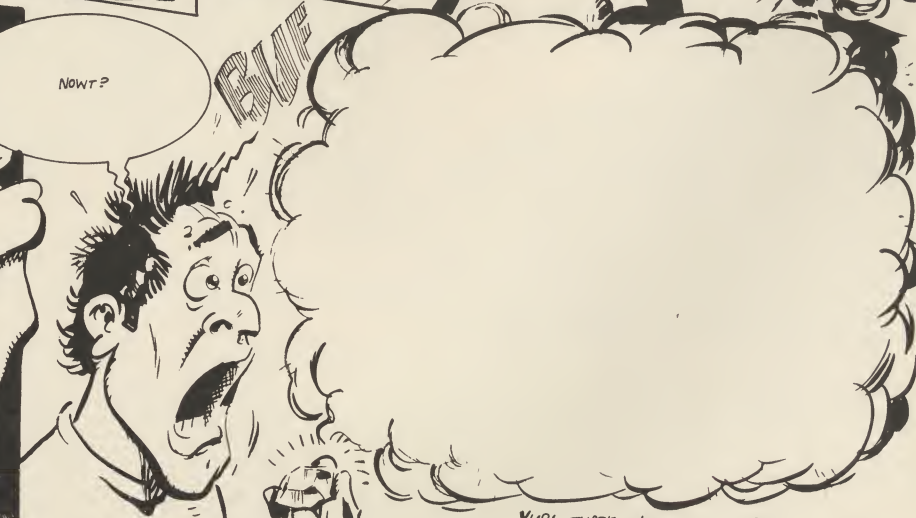
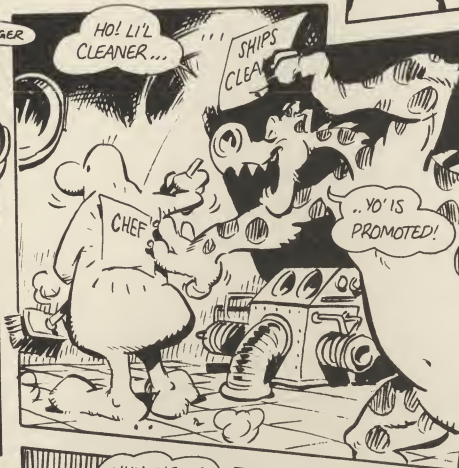
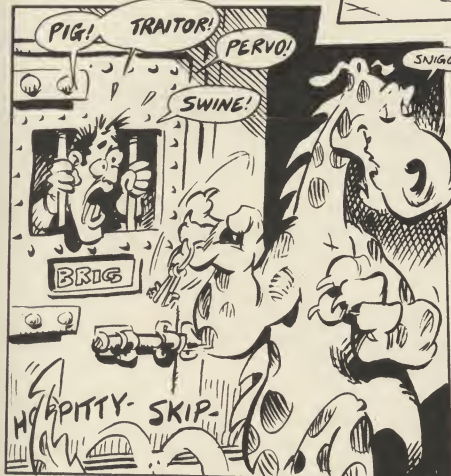
HO BOY! IS HE WIPSET 'BOUT THAT! I BET HE BOILING MAD... I BET HE GOIN' TO EXPLODE WITH ANGER ANY MINUTE 'BOUT NOW...

YUP! I BET HE GOIN' TO ERUPT INTO ACTION ANY OL' SECOND... ANY SECOND NOW, YOU BET... YEP... YOU JUST WATCH... HAH!

... HE AIN'T GOIN' STAND FOR THAT... NOSSIR... ANY SECOND NOW HE GOIN' GO! YOU BET! YOU JUST WATCH... YOU'LL SEE... SHO' NUFF... ANY SEC...

...THAR HE GOES!!





**Crash
Competition**

BANG.. BANG.. SPLOT..YOU'RE DEAD COMP!

**Part II
THE SAGA
CONTINUES...**



**30 Copies
of ROGUE
TROOPER
courtesy of
PIRANHA
on offer!**

A little while ago, **PIRANHA** sponsored a competition for *Strike Force Cobra* in which readers had the chance to spend a day having fun playing *Combat Zone*.

Now they've gone and released *Rogue Trooper*, based on the famous character from *2000AD*. You have to fight your way across North territory on a quest to collect tapes that will help put your biochip-based comrades, Bagman, Gunnar and Helm, back into bodies. To celebrate the launch of the game that **DESIGN DESIGN** have been working on for **PIRANHA**, the delectable Mandy Keyhoe has decided to hire a whole *Combat Zone* zone for a day in the half-term holidays next Spring.

Now we're recruiting for a Readers' Army to face up to the might (or should that be 'maybe'?) of the **NEWSFIELD** reviewing platoon. In *Combat Zone*, you are equipped with special guns and get to wear special protective clothing (including goggles) and the aim is to capture the flag belonging to the opposing team. We're going to be ranging the talents of Penn and Rignall, Spiky Haired Demons from the **ZZAP!** office (supported by a few other folks from the computer magazines) against a crack squad of readers.

I've had more than enough of the nasty jokes and pranks that everyone in the Towers plays on

me, so I'm looking for a couple of champions to wreak revenge for me. This is your chance to deal a painty 'death' to the egos of the reviewers — the guns used in *Combat Zone* fire paint pellets, and when someone is hit with a splodge of paint they have to lie down doggo and play dead.

Fancy a go? What we want is a recruiting poster for the army that will challenge the Spiky Haired Ones and the Reviewers Army on the appointed day. Go to town on a full-race propaganda campaign if you like, pointing out all the shortcomings of the horrid reviewers who will become 'the enemy' every day. Mention their track record of Minion-abusing if you like, or the unrealistic size of their egos. Just make them out to be mean 'n' nasty bunch so that any passing pedestrian would be immediately inspired to do his or her duty and sign up for the conflict.

**THE READERS'
ARMY NEEDS YOU**

Put your Kitchener type poster on a sheet of paper, no bigger than A4 (which is the size of the page you're reading), and send the finished article to **MINION'S PAINTY REVENGE, CRASH Training Camp, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**. Entries must arrive before January the 20th 1987.

The best two recruiting posters will win their propaganda artists the chance to participate in the *Ego Wars*. Thirty runners-up get to collect a complimentary copy of the game, *Rogue Trooper*.

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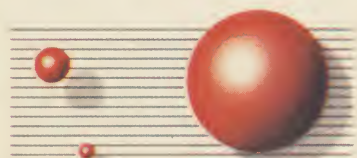
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With over 125 different screens, 300 k of programming, more than 1,000 sprites, you take control of The Last Ninja with an option of sixty different moves if you can find the right weapons.

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**Crash
Competition**



Ever watch CENTURIONS? It's a great cartoon featuring some really mighty heroes who are always romping around saving the day: three clean-living guys and one super fido, dedicated to the defence of Earth. Every Saturday morning alien hordes attack our home planet, and every Saturday morning the Centurions save us all from a fate several times worse than death. Sounds like it'd make a good computer game, doesn't it? Well that's exactly what ARIOLASOFT think — at this very moment they are converting the antics and adventures of the CENTURIONS into a thrilling new game.

In the meantime ARIOLASOFT have decided to donate some goodies, kicking off with an ARIOLASOFT Goodie Bag containing five albums, three books, four ARIOLASOFT games, a CENTURION model and four swell T-Shirts!

Mere words alone cannot describe this prize, so take a look at the piccy on this page and gasp away. Twenty five T-Shirts are also on offer for runners up. Interested? Well I'm going to make you work for this one. Here's the competition...

Despite the prestigious title of CRASH Editor and the maturity his job as Big Cheese Publishing Executive requires, Mr Kidd is well into CENTURIONS. You should see him run up and down the office shouting 'Power Extreme!', pretending the office dustbin is an alien robot. Biff! Bap! Bop! he goes, laying into the bin with a manic gleam in his eye. A few kicks and a punch later the evil bin is defeated — no longer will it and the rubbish hordes tyrannise the office. The Doc Martened One then pops into the toilet with a smug look on his face... to return thirty seconds later in his mild

mannered CRASH Editor secret identity.

This is all getting a bit tedious as Mr Kidd's antics do tend to spread rubbish about the place, and though Ol' Doc Marten's CENTURION imitations are entertaining to say the least, we do value his abilities a bit more.

This is where you can help. The plan is to booby trap the office dustbin in some way so as to give Graeme a real shock the next time he tries to do battle with it. It has to be a big shock though — hopefully a big enough shock to curtail his bin bashing career once and for all. Just design a Graeme Kidd frightener that will sit nice and innocently in the bin until attacked. It should burst into scary animation the moment he starts kicking the bin..

Send the design to me. The creator of the best anti-Kidd device will have his or her efforts rewarded with an ARIOLASOFT

Goodie Bag. The best of the rest will receive one of the twenty five T-Shirts.

So get cracking and send your entries to **STOP MR DOC MARTEN PRATTING ABOUT, CRASH Towers, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB** to arrive before the 20th of January 1987. Don't forget to write your T-Shirt size on your entry together with your name and address, so we can send the right size prize if you win... entries without a T-Shirt size simply won't be valid!

Name

Address

..... Post Code

T SHIRT SIZE (S, M or L)

TOP THIRTY FOR CHRISTMAS 86



Nothing very startling has happened this month as Elite have now got the top four positions with **GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS** prevailing over **PAPERBOY**, **BOMB JACK** and **COMMANDO** from the top dog position. But wait - what's this on the horizon? **REBEL STAR RAIDERS** from Firebird go straight in at number 13 followed closely by **NIGHTMARE RALLY** from Ocean in the number 15 slot. Can anyone get to the closely guarded top four? Perhaps Ocean's **GREAT ESCAPE** can tunnel in from number 17, or Bunt's **TRAP DOOR** may lead there for PIRANHA? Only you know for sure - it's your votes that will determine whether they're there at all next month in the **CRASH CHARTS**.

Chris Gough of Romford will soon be attracting Aunt Aggie's attention as the winner of this month's **Hotline Draw**. He'll be able to order from Aggie forty goodies worth of goodies with which to spoil himself and his Spectrum in the new year. Festival Gallatons will also be going to four runners up who will all receive a **CRASH Hat** and T-Shirt via Apple post and fifty bags. So lucky did you be to Steven Ellis of Cleveland; Adrian Bird of Gwynedd; Julian Scott who's from Kent and finally Robin Ibbson who is a Yorkshireman.

The **HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART** compiled from the votes of **CRASH** readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games - it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms that live on the Results pages and make your voice heard. Well, make your writing readable - there's no longer a phoneline voting service.

If you don't want to carve up your copy of **CRASH**, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy out the details from the voting forms onto a nice clean sheet of paper and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your opinion, there's always the chance of winning a rather interesting prize. Once the information has been taken from the forms we receive during the course of the month, ten voting slips are drawn out for special consideration by Auntie Aggie - five from the **Adventure Ballot Box** and five from the **Hotline Ballot Box**.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a **CRASH T-Shirt** is awarded to the first slip out of the draw from the **Hotline** votes, and another £40 worth of goodies and a **Shirt** goes to the **Hotline Draw** winner.

Four runners up from each ballot collect a **CRASH T-Shirt** and a **CRASH Hat**, so get those votes in to the **CRASH HOTLINE** and **CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL** PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

Hotline Top 30

1 (1)	GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS	ELITE
2 (2)	PAPERBOY	ELITE
3 (5)	BOMB JACK	ELITE
4 (3)	COMMANDO	ELITE
5 (6)	QUAZATRON	HEWSON
6 (8)	JACK THE NIPPER	GREMLIN GRAPHICS
7 (4)	ELITE	FIREBIRD
8 (16)	LIGHTFORCE	FTL
9 (11)	DYNAMITE DAN II	MIRRORSOFT
10 (9)	BATMAN	OCEAN
11 (7)	MATCHDAY	OCEAN
12 (10)	GREEN BERET	IMAGINE
13 (-)	REBEL STAR RAIDERS	FIREBIRD
14 (12)	BOBBY BEARING	THE EDGE
15 (-)	NIGHTMARE RALLY	OCEAN
16 (26)	HEAVY ON THE MAGIC	GARGOYLE GAMES
17 (-)	THE GREAT ESCAPE	OCEAN
18 (20)	PING PONG	IMAGINE
19 (21)	STAINLESS STEEL	MIKRO-GEN
20 (24)	TRIVIAL PURSUIT	DOMARK
21 (22)	SPELLBOUND	MASTERTRONIC
22 (18)	MOVIE	IMAGINE
23 (17)	DAN DARE	VIRGIN
24 (25)	EXPLODING FIST	MELBOURNE HOUSE
25 (-)	TRAP DOOR	PIRANHA
26 (28)	KNIGHT TYME	MASTERTRONIC
27 (-)	BACK TO SKOOL	MICROSPHERE
28 (-)	BOUNDER GREMLIN	GRAPHICS
29 (-)	URIDIUM	HEWSONS
30 (-)	TT RACER	DIGITAL INTEGRATION

Adventure Top 30

1 (1)	HEAVY ON THE MAGIC	GARGOYLE GAMES
2 (5)	KNIGHT TYME	MASTERTRONIC
3 (3)	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	BEYOND
4 (4)	SPELLBOUND	MASTERTRONIC
5 (6)	FAIRLIGHT	THE EDGE
6 (8)	THE HOBBIT	MELBOURNE HOUSE
7 (11)	PRICE OF MAGIC	LEVEL 9
8 (9)	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND
9 (2)	THE BOGGIT	CRL
10 (-)	KENTILLA	MASTERTRONIC
11 (-)	MASTER OF MAGIC	MASTERTRONIC
12 (18)	REDHAWK	MELBOURNE HOUSE
13 (16)	SHADOWFIRE	BEYOND
14 (19)	BORED OF THE RINGS	SILVERSOFT
15 (17)	REDMOON	GARGOYLE GAMES
16 (13)	FOURTH PROTOCOL	CENTURY/HUTCHINSON
17 (-)	WORM IN PARADISE	LEVEL 9
18 (12)	DRAGONTORC	HEWSON
19 (20)	DUN DARACH	GARGOYLE GAMES
20 (27)	GREMLINS	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
21 (25)	SHERLOCK	MELBOURNE HOUSE
22 (14)	TIR NA NOG	GARGOYLE GAMES
23 (-)	FRANKIE	OCEAN
24 (-)	HAMPSTEAD	MELBOURNE HOUSE
25 (-)	ROBIN O'THE WOOD	ODIN
26 (7)	LORD OF THE RINGS	MELBOURNE HOUSE
27 (-)	DUNGEON ADVENTURE	LEVEL 9
28 (21)	SWORDS AND SORCERY	PSS
29 (26)	MARSPORT	GARGOYLE GAMES
30 (23)	VALHALLA	LEGEND

Well, HEAVY ON THE MAGIC is our Gargoyle game for yet another month but only just month? Or could it be a newcomer that wears the crown? MASTER OF MAGIC from Mastertronic shows for the first time in the charts at number 11 and a couple of oldies reappear to show that there's life in them yet.

KENTILLA written by our very own Derek Brewster shows at number 10 for Mastertronic and the grand daddy of all adventure games DUNGEON ADVENTURE, originally played on mainframe computers by bored programmers, comes into the charts in the 27th slot for LEVEL 9.

This month will see Paul Welford of Castle Lea in Gwent with blisters on his firing finger as he gets to play with £40's worth of freable software as this month's lucky winner of the Adventure Draw. Well done to him and congratulations are also in order for four other CRASH readers who will soon be looking resplendent in their CRASH Hats and T Shirts. Who are the gang of four who will soon set the computer fashions industry ablaze? Stephen Bressington of Kirkby-in-Ashfield; Paul Devenish who's from Surrey; Robert Keeling from Wheelock where it's very difficult to steal anybody's bike (it's a joke - honest) and finally David Singer, of Cheltenham that's who!

CRASH



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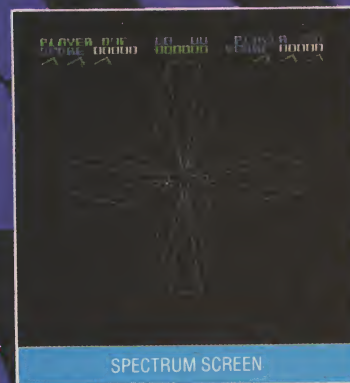
T H E C U L T A R C A D E G A M E



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AMTIX ACCOLADE 'Electric Dreams' amazing
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TM



REVIEWERS CHALLENGE



THE ZZAP! SCORELORD HAS HIS SAY

For over eighteen cycles I have been orbiting Earth in my Command module, sent to this miserable, pathetic orb of a planet to discover whether indeed its puny organic life-forms are ever likely to show any skill at the art of wielding the joystick.

On my home world, youngsters are trained as Joystick Warriors from an early age, and as their biocircuitry evolves and becomes keener of reflex, the better young apprentices enter the Videodromes to perfect their skills at attaining high scores.

Nearly one and a half of your Earth years ago, I was sent on a mission. A mission that has caused me great pain and physiological damage — damage which is beyond the capabilities of my ship-board mediputer to repair. A mission which required me

to discover a member of your pathetic species who was truly worthy of a scholarship to the Videodromes.

I made an error, shortly after arriving in orbit. A minor malfunction in my navigational computer (which is unused to identifying such small hamlets as those inhabited by your species) resulted in my arrival in the offices of a magazine devoted to Commodore 64 games-playing. Having established contact with the backward beings that I encountered in the ZZAP! offices, I set about discovering which of them was the better player of games — and my problems began. The vile ego-centric creature Rignall became my first Earth champion in the time period you refer to as 'May 1985' and since then my monthly attempts to discover other, better Joystick Warriors from the puny population of Earth has continued. Readers of ZZAP! will be familiar with the damage caused to my bio-ROMs and with the suffering I have endured as a result of my endeavours.

The strange, mutated beings responsible for producing comment on Commodore games have continued building their egos. The ZZAP! chamber is awash with self congratulatory noises as the revolting Spiky Haired demons of Ludlow continue reviewing games. Their Egos have been growing uncontrollably, and they resist further challenges against members of the ZZAP! readership for fear of defeat and public humiliation.

It was time to change this state of affairs.

So confident were the foul ZZAP! duo of Penn and Rignall in their self-appointed roles as games-playing champions of the magazine publishing world, that they suggested they be allowed to pit their skills in a contest with reviewers from the other computer magazines produced in the vicinity. As a time of celebration approaches, which your sentimental race refers to as 'Christmas', I issued the order that the NEWSFIELD REVIEWERS CHALLENGE should be arranged.

The CRASH and AMTIX! staff were commanded to select the prime of their reviewing team to face up to Penn and Rignall. Each of the six reviewers selected a game that runs on their computer, and the contest to discover the most able Joystick Warrior began.

In choosing a game, each reviewer believed that he was attempting to thwart his five opponents by selecting a game that they were unfamiliar with and that he was good at playing. They all believed that I would award six points to the person to gain the highest score in each game, five points to the second highest and so on, and would award an overall championship to the individual with the highest total score.

A foolish assumption. Particularly foolish on the part of the ZZAP! egomaniacs, who know me of old. . . .

Before relating the tale of the challenge itself, let me introduce you to the pathetic specimens who stepped into the arena and tell you a little about the games that they each brought with them:

JULIAN RIGNALL

A decidedly evil and puny creature whose ego began to grow many years ago when he was awarded a title by an antique computer magazine by the name of C&VG. Since those days when the tiny Rignall first brushed with fame, his body and ego have grown at disproportionate rates. Currently, his ego is large enough to be regarded as a second moon for your planet while his body and musculature are still on a par with a two-week-old Orang u'tang.

His choice of game is *Dropzone*, a horizontal scrolling shoot em up, available only on the Commodore.

In essence *Dropzone* resembles an arcade game by the name of *Star Gate* — a sort of enhanced *Defender*. The player controls a man with a jet pack, laser, smart bombs and an invis cloak that grants temporary immunity to aliens and their weapons.

GARY PENN

Known as 'Girlie' to ZZAP! readers on account of his Pennchant for dressing up in nighties made for pre-pubescent schoolgirls, as well as for huge, elaborate tonsorial sculptures created with the aid of giant economy sized tins of Boots Own Brand hair lacquer, Penn's prime claim to fame amongst his readership is achieved by performing Dangerous Brothers type stunts. So far he has stuffed the entire ZZAP! storecup-board's supply of joysticks down his trousers and eaten four fingers of Kit Kat sideways.

His choice for the Challenge is, again, a Commodore-only game, this time by the name of *Sanxion*. It's a

one-way horizontal scrolling shoot em up in which the player zooms through forty increasingly difficult levels shooting anything that moves.

RICHARD EDDY

Known as 'Dick' to his friends and 'Dick Ed' to his enemies, Mr Eddy is Cornish by birth and upbringing and was prised from the land of clotted cream by the Editor of AMTIX who though he could do with another clot on his team. Since arriving in Ludlow a few of your Earth months ago, the small but imperfectly formed creature has elevated himself to Software Editor status, fallen in love with Berk from *Trapdoor*, and covered his corner of the AMTIX! cellar wall with pictures of Mandy Keyhoe of PIRANHA and Berk of *Trapdoor* in roughly equal quantities.

When pressed to make a choice of game for the contest, Eddy plumped for *Xeno* from ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE, believing that this *Ballblazer*esque futuresport wasn't due for release on the other two machines before the Challenge was to take place. Sadly, Dick Ed was wrong — this High-Tech Ice Hockey variant in which players aim to knock the puck into their opponent's goal with giant sleds arrived in the CRASH office in good time for the Spectrum reviewers to get some practice in. . . .

MASSIMO VALDUCCI

A Stallion when it comes to playing ELITE's *Scooby Doo*, this Italian was fully aware that the doggy game has been well played in the CRASH office (although unavailable on the Commodore). Mass, as he is known, claimed to be the champion when it comes to playing *Scooby Doo* and based his choice on the probability of an easy six points. . . .

A resilient fellow, El Ducci is rumoured to have contacts with the famed Ludlow Mafia and has already used his influence and means of persuasion to arrange for AMTIX! Editor Malcolm Harding to collect him every morning and drive him to work and then chauffeur him home again at the end of the day.

BEN STONE

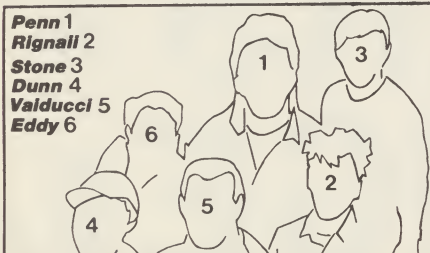
A veritable lounge lizard from the tiny and remote Earth dwelling-zone known as Tenbury Wells, Ben Stone has been associated with CRASH for a considerable period of Earth-time. Having completed his studies at a the Tenbury Wells Academy where he specialised in playing the antique arcade machine provided for students' amusement, Ben has entered another training scheme which permits him to lounge around the CRASH office on a semi-permanent basis, supplying comments on games and generally assisting in the writing of the magazine.

The Beau Brummel of Spectrum gaming, Stone invests the majority of his paltry income in his wardrobe and is rarely seen without a set of labels, including Rebok trainers, Lacoste and Fila jumpers and Benetton playsuits. The man who took Posing to Tenbury chose *Cobra* for the Challenge — a game which had only arrived on Microdrive in the CRASH office 48 hours before the appointed day and which had only been seen and played by the CRASH staffers when the Challenge began. The game is a left and right scrolling shoot em-up, full of gratuitous violence and eating, loosely based on the film of the same name. . . .

MICHAEL DUNN

Nicknamed 'Skippy' for a reason that has been lost in the mists of time, Dunn's early claim to fame arrived shortly after he joined the CRASH team as a reviewer. He was chosen to model for the AMTIX! hat and T-shirts advertisement in the arms of a rather strange young lady. An interesting biological specimen, Skippy has the ability to render his entire face, from eyebrow to earlobe, the colour of an over-ripe tomato whenever reference to that girlfriend is made. . . . A man who harbours a number of guilty secrets?

Full Throttle was this blushing reviewer's first choice — a motorbike game that appeared over two of your Earth years ago. Dunn no doubt believed that the other reviewers in the Challenge would have long ago forgotten how to play this two-wheeled race game and no doubt expected to be able to romp home to an easy six point lead in at least one event. . . .



LET BATTLE BEGIN.....

Dropzone

Aim: to score as many points as possible in 10 minutes



RIGNALL

After much wingeing, the Spiky Haired ones from ZZAP! prevail upon the other contestants and are allowed to commence the Challenge with *Dropzone*. Rignall insists on starting, as the game is his choice, he whines. It is one of his all-time binary conquests — a conquest on which he has been building his ego for some time.

The puny one gets off to a shaky start — presumably the thrill of playing with an old flame again — and he narrowly manages to complete the first two levels without losing a life. Suddenly, within the space of ten seconds, Rignall loses two lives — am I to be rewarded with a crushing defeat on the part of one of my arch-hates so soon?

Sadly, it is not to be. Misery crosses the Rignall face as defeat looms, and spurred on by the inertia of his massive ego he manages to survive, completing his allotted 10 minutes as a score of 154,870 shows on the screen.

STONE

Dressed to kill, but capable of rescuing scientists? Stone steps forward muttering about having played this game a couple of times, and does his best to prove that this is indeed the case.

He starts off reasonably well, expiring at the end of his first game with a score of 14,840 and a fair amount of time remaining in which to improve his status.

In his second game, Ben doesn't lose a life until at least 3 minutes have passed and 28,460 points have been logged on the clock. Unperturbed, he plays on with a maniacal gleam in his eye, expiring gracefully just as the 10-minute klaxon sounds. A creditable 55,080 points are entered into the communiputer's log against Stone's name.

EDDY

Another *Dropzone* virgin. Another expected failure as far as the ZZAP! rivals are concerned. Richard bravely steps forward to take his place at the joystick and commences play — only to demonstrate his lack of experience by losing his first life after a mere ten seconds. A true hair-trigger performance.

Gathering a little composure under a barrage of verbal abuse and loud hilarity from Penn and Rignall, Eddy presses on, but his first game lasts barely a minute and he collects a paltry 4,580 for his efforts.

Nine minutes remain for him to develop a technique, but Dick manages three more complete games before the time limit expires. He has to be satisfied with an overall personal best of 15,440.

DUNN

The first of the lambs brought to the Commodore for

slaughter in front of the Spiky Haired vile ones. Skippy has not played this game before — so understandably finds it difficult to survive. Within a couple of minutes his first attempt is over, and a score of 9,480 is all he has achieved.

Pressing on, Dunn seems to be a quick learner. His second foray sees him nudge over the 20,000 mark but then he suddenly goes to pieces. A life is lost at 23,780, another at 24,040 and the last remaining incarnation is removed as the clock hits 24,800.

Valiantly, this petite player sporting a red LM hat starts again, but is rapidly wiped out after scoring a mere 5,430 points. There is no time remaining in the 10 minute allocation for a fourth attempt. It is yet very early in the Challenge, however...

PENN

Another cocky Commodorian. Penn marches up to the playzone, straddles the chair, oozing self-confidence and a strong aroma of Boots hairlacquer...

Penn's familiarity with the game shows the moment he begins play — within 23 seconds he has gathered up and rescued the eight scientists to complete the first level. He continues to romp through the second and third levels at a rapid pace and I find myself becoming annoyed at this mutoid's arrogance.

Ha! I am quickly pleased — overconfidence combined with the desire to show off causes the worm to lose concentration for a moment, and he loses two lives. He slows down a little, playing more cautiously but nevertheless manages to scrape a huge score of 123,010 in a single game by the time the klaxon goes and his time in front of the Commodore screen is brought to a timely end.

VALDUCCI

Champing at the bit, Mass throws himself into this totally unfamiliar game like 'a bull at a gate' to borrow an illogical linguistic construction from your Earth language.

Another hair-trigger merchant, El Ducci grimaces, sneers and snarls his way through early failure — taking less than 90 seconds to expire with a score of 6,530.

He fares a little better in the second game, clocking 15,090 before dying — thus forcing his AMTIX! colleague firmly into last place. He continues, attempting to improve his ranking, but despite cramming three more short games into the remaining time, fails to improve his score.

Scooby Doo

Aim: to score as many points as possible in 10 minutes



EDDY

This is another of those 'cute' games that seem to attract Dick Ed's attentions — rather like *Trapdoor*. He claims to 'love' playing *Scooby*, and sets to, making strange cooling noises.

This would-be spiky haired reviewer (he gave up emulating Penn when his meagre wages would not cover the enormous cost of hair lacquer and gel) seems competent at this game. He finishes the first level with a score of 8,590 and without the loss of a single life. He continues to complete the second level without death and has 31,450 points to his credit.

El Ducci begins to make threatening noises and starts talking loudly about 'concrete trainers' (whatever they may be) as Dickie passes the 37,000 mark which he celebrates with the loss of a life. Another life is lost as

37,700 appears on the clock and the Stallion whinnies in anger. Another life goes at 38,000 and another at 38,450. The game ends on 38,700 after a little over eight minutes.

Confident with his high score, and apparently oblivious to the dark threats from the Mafiosi, Eddy kisses his *Trapdoor* poster with glee and skips off for a cup of tea, declining to begin another game.

RIGNALL

Not a total virgin when it comes to this doggy game, Rignall demonstrates the sneaky side of his vile personality the moment he begins play. Rather than attempting to complete levels and rescue his mates, the puny one remains rooted to the spot biffing ghosts to collect points.

Howls of derision echo round the arena and Rignall is forced to make some token effort towards actually playing the game. After 4 minutes of manipulative play, he is on the second level with a score of 21,100 when his lives run out.

Commencing a second game, the odious creature collects a mere 9,800 points before timeout.

DUNN

Claiming moderate proficiency at the Spectrum version of this game, Dunn begins play and the spectators soon wonder if the Amstrad version is a different platter of Scooby snacks! For a tense half minute he is crowded by ghosts which he has difficulty in keeping at bay and eventually loses a life.

Progressing through the first level with plenty of close shaves, he manages to rescue Thelma and attain a score of 5,000. Collecting three new lives in quick succession, things begin to go well: then disaster strikes. After five minutes of play the game comes to an abrupt end with 19,500 on the clock.

Restarting rapidly, Skippy plays a remarkably similar game and is on the point of rescuing Fred with a score of 19,250 when time runs out for him...

PENN

Aha! This is a game that Penn has not played before. Maybe he is due for his first come-uppance!

Grudgingly, I have to admit that he does rather well. Rescuing Thelma to complete Level One, Penn has lost one life as the second level starts. He begins to get smug. Five lives are lost in the space of a single minute, and the smugness disappears. With one life remaining, he battles on, desperately trying to rescue Fred. I am pleased to see him meet a swift end at the hands of a marauding Jack-in-the-pot.

With a score of 19,240 to his credit, Penn takes a second crack at rescuing Scooby's chums but has little time to improve his score and is left with a score of 11,850 as the ten minutes allocation ends.

VALDUCCI

A chance to pull back from a previous poor showing. El Ducci settles in front of his favourite game and sets about proving to the assembled throng that he is the Godfather when it comes to *Scooby Doo*.

And he certainly does a good job. Although the first few minutes of play reveal no spectacular skills — the Italian One loses his first life after a minute and a half when 950 points have been amassed — staying power is obviously the Stallion's strong point... he continues playing until the time limit is up. He has galloped up to the second level and has a score of 37,050 when time runs out.

STONE

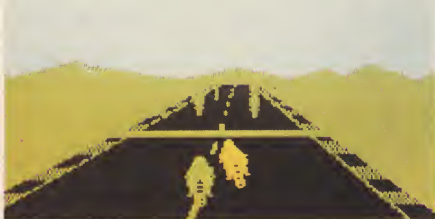
Mr Label wears a few more microns from the soles of his Reboks as he approaches the joystick and states that he is 'cool' at the game. Mr Cool loses his first life two minutes into the game — towards the end of the first level. In less than a minute, he recovers his composure, cranks his designer score up to 13,150 and completes Level One. Thereafter he loses lives at roughly one minute intervals, steadily building up his score until the last life goes at 9 minutes and 15 seconds with the clock at 33,200.

Evidently a practitioner of the Designer Endgame, this lad: he finishes as close to the expiry of the time limit as he can.

Full Throttle

Aim: to achieve the shortest time for a three lap circuit of Silverstone

SILVERSTONE
SPEED: 175 LAP NO: 1
POSITION: 39



VALDUCCI

Demanding that he at least be allowed to leap into the saddle of a Moto Guzzi as he hasn't seen this game before, our macho hero screams round the track, remaining firmly in last position for the entire first lap. He moves up to 35th place on the second lap. The third and final lap begins, and Mass finds himself back at the tail end. Some jostling improves his placing temporarily — he reaches 37th place — but manages to regain his tail-end placing in time for the finish line. The race ends after 2 minutes and 43 seconds of dubious riding.

STONE

Not a designer game, this one, in the opinion of Mr Trendful. Moan, gripe, complain "This is years old." Admitting to having played the game "ages ago", Stone zooms off and completes the first lap in one minute dead, attaining 30th place briefly. On the second circuit he shaves a few seconds off his lap time, crossing the line in 1 minute 53 seconds in last position.

An uneventful final lap sees Ben finish the race in a total time of 2 minutes and 44 seconds — in last place. Not a leader of the pack when it comes to biking. . .

RIGNALL

"Har Har" quoth the weedy one, "I played this one back in the good old days before I got a Commodore", and settles down in front of the screen.

A slight problem is encountered on the first corner, which has the Rignall rump in danger of severe damage, but a rapid recovery is made and the noxious creature gets into his stride, attaining 17th place during the first lap. He fares less well on the second lap, dropping to last as he crosses the finishing line for the second time. A minor recovery takes place in the final lap and Rignall takes the chequered flag with a time of 2 minutes 40 seconds.

DUNN

Clearly this is Skippy's game. He proves to be rather good at it, burning round the track and gaining first position with ease. He suffers a collision during the first lap, but isn't penalised too badly in the event, crossing the winning line with a time of 2 minutes 30 seconds, 12 seconds ahead of the first of the computer controlled bikers.

Strange, I would have expected the ZZAP! Dirty Tricks Department to have swung into distraction action with loud references to Skippy's girlfriend, but they remained silent. Odd. Most odd indeed. . .

EDDY

There's nothing cute or cuddly about motorbikes, and seeing as the Cornish Clot hasn't played this game before, no-one in the arena seems to believe that the AMTIX! Accolader is going to fare very well.

Gripping the joystick as if it was a handlebar is not the brightest way to play the game, the assembled throng points out, and eventually Dick Ed stops living

up to his name and sets out on the gruelling ride. He gets off to a decidedly shaky start, weaving all over the track, and is soon miles behind all the other riders. Even with no other riders in sight, the Cornish Pixie seems to be suffering from clotted reflexes and has severe difficulty remaining on the track.

Eventually he catches up. He keeps nudging other bikes repeatedly yet manages to make his way to 33rd place at one stage during the second lap. Disaster strikes: he hits several bikes, falls into last place and drags over the line in a time of 2 minutes 42 seconds — a surprisingly good time, given his riding abilities.

PENN

More moaning: "It's like a poor man's *Super Cycle*". Winge, complain. No doubt the wide-jawed, joystick-trousered one is suffering from a lack of hairspray, for his morale seems to be drooping a little, along with his strangely coiffed hair. "The flickering bikes are putting me off", he winges, bumping his way around the track.

An uninspiring ride from such a self-proclaimed game player — high spot of the three laps is the brief moment when Penn squeaks into 36th place, but he manages to finish 39th in 2 minutes 41 seconds. A fairly close matched ride all round, with Skippy justifying his personal choice by a comfortable margin.

Sanxion

Aim: to score as many points as possible in 10 minutes



STONE

More designer complaining from the Effete One. His first game lasts a little over two minutes in which Ben claws his way to a score of 6,480. Apparently he has played this game a little, but from his performance he might as well not have bothered. . .

Game Two gets off to a slightly better start — 10,580 points are on the clock when the first life goes, but then the second, third and fourth lives are all lost on the walls and no extra points are gained! Wasteful playing, indeed.

After a couple of hundred seconds, Wave One has been negotiated and the score pushed up to 11,380. When he finally expires — with 3 minutes playtime available to him, Stone throws in the towel and gives up. Pusillanimous play indeed.

EDDY

The soft, wimpy Eddy likes *Sanxion*. The soft, wimpy Eddy rapidly proves he's not very good at playing *Sanxion*. Three games are played in a little over three minutes and 2,700 is the highest score reached.

Game four gets off to a slightly better start — only two crashes in the first 30 seconds — but before long D-Ed is having problems again, flying slowly, shooting slowly and bumping into things. What this Cornish Patsie needs is something big and colourful and girlie like *Trapdoor*. I despair of him.

Oh rarity! He has managed to squeeze onto the second level. No bonus achieved in the transition, though. A bomb puts paid to his run for glory at 7,640 points.

Starting out again with less than four minutes remaining, he negotiates the first level successfully, running into a bomb once but otherwise managing a clear run. Entering the bonus level with 2,950 the cutie starts the second level with 4,765 points and starts having a hard time again. Somehow he survives — and almost begins to shine, but crashes into the first set of barriers at the end of the level with 9 minutes 15 seconds elapsed and 8,910 points on the clock.

VALDUCCI

A manic style of play characterises El Ducci's attempts at *Sanxion* — a game he admits to having attempted on a couple of occasions. His first game lasts a mere 47 seconds and yields 1,650 points. Second time around he lasts 4 seconds longer, but still comes out with 1,650 points. Cunningly consistent if a little short and sweet! Manic stabs of the fire button combined with rather slow reactions don't help. . .

Slowing down a bit from the premature ejection style of missile hurling, the Stallion takes his third game a bit more steadily, survives the first level and progresses carefully until his last life is removed by a collision with a barrier at 9,000 points.

Another quick game sees him enter the second level and survive long enough to collect 7,400 points — performance he repeats once more, crashing just as the klaxon sounds and 5,960 have been collected.

Stacatto stabs combined with staying power seems to be the gaming style adopted by the Italian Stallion in all but *Scoby Doo*.

PENN

Slithering into the hotseat, collecting the joystick coolly and starting play, Penn takes to *Sanxion* like an Umbertian swamp slug to a rippling pool of slime. It is a sickening sight, watching him play casually and almost competently. He has nearly made it to the end of the third stage and collected over 28,000 points before he loses the first life of the game, a mere 3 minutes 42 seconds after starting. Two minutes and another 13,000 points elapse before the second loss of life — but it only takes another 7 seconds for the Mohican Monster to die again, I note with some satisfaction.

A tricky moment follows around the 49,000 mark and Penn opts to commit suicide when confronted with the Mother Ship. One minute remains as he enters the last bonus screen and Bonus Level 5 looms nigh. 'Girlie' commences Level 6 with 71,770, and six seconds before timeout he loses a life, achieving a score of 73,070.

Unable to resist an opportunity to demonstrate the sheer size of his ego, the revolting creature continues to play while all around him yawn with boredom. The arrogant fellow finally leaves the computer with a large, smug grin spread across his large, smug mouth and 124,500 on the clock. . .

DUNN

It's all new to him. Looking particularly frail and Rignall-esque behind his specs, Skippy plonks himself down behind a Commodoreful of *Sanxion* and prepares to do his best at a game he has just seen played for the first time.

His first attempt lasts almost 30 seconds, and before the 90 second mark is up, two more games have taken place. The Blushing One's third game begins to look a little more promising as he blasts his way through to the second level. It looks like a probable personal best for the Nervous Creature as he expires on the barriers at the end of the second level with a score of 10,620 points.

And indeed, that it exactly what it proves to be — a further three short games fail to yield significant scores as the 10 minute limit ends.

RIGNALL

Rignall must sense defeat, for he begins a litany of moans covering a range of subjects to do with not liking the game, not having had the chance to practice enough, and hardly having time to pilot a *Sanxion* Fighter long enough to get used to the controls. All this, despite hours playing the game when it came in for review. Ha! he will lose to Penn, that is for sure.

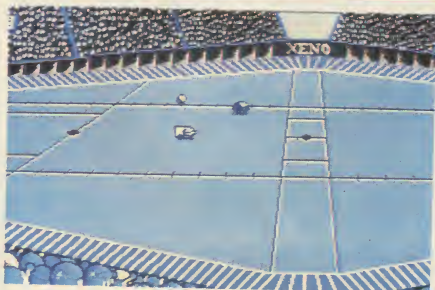
He starts badly, losing a life after 20 seconds. Thus un-nerved, he only just makes it to the second level. The small Spiky creature copes with the third level with manic precision and enters the fourth level with 35,380 points to his credit. At the start of level five, he gets a little over-confident and loses two lives in quick succession. Two more lives disappear before the Mother Ship is encountered and disposed of.

The defence barriers at the end of the fifth level prove a major problem. After severe effort, which appears to raise strange bruises on the thorax of this spindly being, Rignall fails to avoid death and ends the game with a

score of 43,990. Only 90 seconds remain, so it is clearly not worth continuing with a second game.

Xeno

Aim: the best score from two games played on Average Skill level is used. Each game consists of four minute-long quarters



EDDY

The Cornish Piskie believed that *Xeno* would only be available on the Amstrad by the time my Challenge took place — and his decision to include it in the AMTIX! portfolio of games was clearly influenced by this factor. The diminutive one is overtaken by events, however, and the game arrives in the CRASH office in good time for Stone and Dunn to get plenty of practice.

This news is broken to him just as he starts to play, and somewhat petulantly, he commences. Clearly, the foolish fellow is un-nerved by the news. He fails to score in the 1st quarter and it ends 0-0. The computer score 16 seconds into the 2nd quarter and shortly thereafter Dick Ed pulls back to 1-1. Plenty of active play ensues and just before the 2nd quarter ends Dickie is about to shoot and... the quarter ends. Not his day, it seems!

He concedes another goal early in the 3rd quarter, but manages to pull back to a 2-2 draw by the end of the rather uneventful game. If this is the best the lad can do, needlework might have been a better choice of occupation...

The Cornish Clot's next game goes rather better — he maintains the edge over the computer, scoring early in the 1st quarter and after about 20 seconds in the 2nd quarter. As the 4th quarter starts, Dickie is winning 3-0, and is beginning to look pleased with himself. Pride always comes before a fall, according to one of your Earth Interjections, and the case is proved yet again. A mere 9 seconds before the end of the game, the computer scores and Dickie is left with a best score of 3-1. He appears less than pleased...

DUNN

Maybe Eddy was put off by the fact that the CRASH team were gloating about all the practice they had been able to put in. Now is the time for the pudding to be proved by consumption — to paraphrase another of your strange linguistic constructions.

My Pleasure Circuits thrill as Dunn begins to lose. By the end of the 1st quarter the computer leads 4-0, a lead it expands to 5-0 by the end of the 2nd quarter and to 7-0 by the end of the 3rd. At the end of Game One the blushing Spectrum-wielder is 8-0 down to the computer. I have not had so much pleasure watching a Challenger play a game since my Mission began, and I sense my Pleasure Circuit overload fuses warming for the first time in eons... What can Skippy do to amuse me in the second game?

His second session starts rather better. In the 1st quarter the computer only succeeds in scoring one goal. My Pleasure Circuit fuses cool a little. During the second quarter the computer hammers two more goals home, and in the third quarter scores three. The final quarter begins with Skippy a gentle shade of pink and the computer 6-0 in the lead. It ends with a 7-0 defeat and a rather more intense shade of pink reflecting off the monitor screen...

VALDUCCI

The manic technique comes to the fore again. I have little desire to report on the Stallion's performance here. Suffice to say he wins his first game 7-0 and then goes

on to perform like an agitated rabbit running away from myxamatoxis, ending up exhausted with a lead of 14 goals to 0. I am displeased.

STONE

My early pleasure in observing the computer win at *Xeno* looks set to be ruined. Stone has decided that this game is a game for posers such as he, and fights the computer every inch of the way. He wins the first match, 6-2. Spurred on, he manages to play even more designer shots in his second match, and concludes with an 11-1 lead. May the kangaroo skin on his trainers moulder...

RIGNALL

Strange indeed. Rignall has never played this before. Yet the puny one desists from the usual defensive barrage of whining that usually forms a part of his binary foreplay if he feels in the slightest danger of doing less than well. I am bemused.

Aha! He has been studying the gameplay of his opponents and has worked out a sneaky way of scoring goals against the computer. He plays an underhand match, and as a result I find myself having to cope with Rignall's 15-0 lead at the end of the first game.

In the 1st quarter it becomes apparent that the sneaky mode of play is not infallible — the wimp only scores two goals. In the second quarter he fails to score and gets stuck on the elastic so gives up in disgust... There's nothing worse than a cheat cheated!

PENN

Another *Xeno* virgin, Penn appears strangely confident, too. What is going on in the spiky minds of these Commodorians?

He beats the computer 3-2 in his first match. To my eternal disgust, he does rather better in his second game, winning 4-0. See how easily pleasure turns to pain — I was overjoyed in the early stages of this section of the contest, and now find myself suffused with frustrated anger. Those who I least wanted to do well have given a creditable account of themselves...

Cobra

Aim: to score as many points as possible in 10 minutes



DUNN

This is supposedly the trump card in the CRASH armoury — only Dunn and Stone have seen it before this moment. Once more, Dunn seems unable to capitalise on an advantage. Within 90 seconds his first session has ended with a paltry score of 6,300. His second effort lasts a little over a minute, but his score improves to 17,000. Four minutes or so after restarting yet again, he has amassed a score of 36,950 and ends the game. HA!

Desperately trying to avoid blushing, Skippy rapidly starts his fourth game — and runs out of time with 44,400 on the clock.

RIGNALL

The unpleasant creature desists from moaning yet again. I fear the worst. He starts off, collects a pistol

almost immediately but then loses the pistol and a life in quick succession. Next, he finds a machine gun and starts to massacre everything in sight — his score has crept up to 30,550 before both gun and life are lost. I am aggrieved.

Invincibility comes to his on-screen persona in a hamburger, but it soon wears off; he is stunned by a pram and loses a life. At the end of Level One the score is 43,550. Seconds later, the pasty-faced mutoid loses his remaining lives and ends up with an overall score of 44,050.

Three short and pathetic attempts follow with Rignall deliberately ending one of them to start again. Nearly 5 minutes remain on the clock as the fourth game begins. Rignall does passably well, moving on to Level Two with 30,000 points and his score creeps up. With less than a minute remaining, he is killed off totally and 41,650 shows on the the clock.

VALDUCCI

After 90 seconds the Italian Stallion has finished his first dose of crimebusting. It seems to be over very quickly for him. His second game takes 99 seconds, his third 47 seconds, his fourth 69 seconds and his fifth bash lasts all of 63 seconds. Top score so far: 8,700 achieved on the first attempt. Strange, given that he and Mr Stallone share the same national origins...

Less than four minutes remain — time for another trio of tries at least, all no doubt pathetically low-scoring. I am amused by the inept attempts of this 'tough guy' to score points by on-screen killing. Maybe in real life, this baby Mafiosi is, as your strange Earth language would have it, "all mouth and trousers".

Things do not look well — he is shot, stabbed and shot again early into the next go, but soon Mass begins mass executions with a machine gun. Points build up at an alarming rate, and the clock registers over 20,000... At last the Italian one has found his form, to my dismay. The Stallone-emulation attempts end at the hands of a bazooka-wielding granny with a score of 24,050 after 9 minutes 18 seconds of play.

EDDY

Another bad start. Dead after 53 seconds with 4,450 points on the clock. In Dick Ed's second game, he manages to get the machine gun and begins an orgy of mindless slaughter. Soon the would-be Spiky Haired One has amassed 25,150 points and become temporarily invincible. Death follows quite rapidly, however, as his score hits 28,600. Six puny games follow before timeout, in which the best score the foolish fellow can create is 8,300.

STONE

A piece of Designer Programming, this, to judge by Ben's desire to play *Cobra*. He claims, loudly, that he is good when it comes to mindless violence. His skill is displayed to all in his first attempt: Stone gathers no moss and hardly any points, being wiped out with 4,150 points to his credit. How are the mighty claims defused!

His second game has all the hallmarks of an AMTIX! reviewer, too — 3,900 points before expiry.

Clearly worried, a large amount of effort goes into the next Stone attempt. Casting caution to the wind and risking the addition of unbecoming sweat stains to his expensive garments, Stone cusses and swears his way to 42,250 points. There is plenty of time remaining in the 10 minute allocation, but Stone reverts to the EDDY/VALDUCCI style of gameplay once more...

PENN

Ha! Incompetence shows through. Penn has never played this game before, a fact he demonstrates with elegant simplicity by ending his first game with a massive score of 650 points. I feel I am about to have my Pleasure Circuits stimulated once more.

Strangely, this wide-mouthed creature finds his feet with his second game, achieving a score of 31,400 at the end of the Level One and progresses to clock up a massive score of 65,600 before expiring. A large allocation of time remains, but the smugness takes over and Penn merely toys with a couple of short games to amuse himself before vacating the joystick. And on that unhappy note, the last Challenge game has been played. It is time to compile the scores and analyse the results...

THE SCORES

My Communiputer had been supplied with the final scores of each game played by the contestants, and almost as soon as Penn had completed his *Cobra* run a full printout of the scores in tabular form was spewing from my portable console. It was snatched up by the assembled throng who insisted on allocating 6 points for the winner in each event, 5 points to the next highest scorer and so on. Their puny mathematical abilities kept them busy for quite a while while I performed my own calculations on the data shown here. . . .

Initial Results Analysis



	Dropzone	Sanxion	Xeno	ScoobyDoo	Cobra	Full Throttle
RIGNALL	154,870	43,990	15-0	21,100	44,050	2:40
PENN	123,010	73,070	4-0	19,240	65,600	2:41
STONE	55,080	15,360	11-1	33,200	42,250	2:44
DUNN	24,800	10,620	0-7	19,500	44,400	2:30
VALDUCCI	15,470	9,000	14-0	37,050	24,050	2:43
EDDY	15,440	8,910	3-1	38,700	28,600	2:42

The sound of falling dandruff dominated the arena as six heads were scratched and fingers counted — an amusing sight to behold. Little did the sextet realise that my calculations had already been performed. Each reviewer had played in pursuit of personal glory. Each

reviewer was keen to discover the overall ranking he had achieved according to the system I had allowed them to believe was to be operated.

Groans suddenly erupted as the result of their primitive calculations appeared. Rignall's smile was so wide



Girlie Penn bangs his head on the desk in frustration as the slightly bruised Rignall streaks ahead in DROPZONE. Could Rignall's collars be a mite tight — that might explain the contusions. . . .

that it seemed the bruising on his neck, contracted before the arena was entered on account of some mysterious practice, became even worse. He thought he was the NEWSFIELD Champion!

Not so, not so. For I had decided that the scoring system was inappropriate. As this was a challenge between the reviewing teams from the three magazines, it is foolish in the extreme to allow games played on the 'home' machine to count into individual's scores. Thus Rignall and Penn are deprived of their points for *Dropzone* and *Sanxion*; Valducci and Eddy deprived of their *Scooby Doo* and *Xeno* points and Stone and Dunn do not get credit for playing *Cobra* and *Full Throttle*.

THE FINAL OUTCOME:

So the scoreboard for the NEWSFIELD CHALLENGE, carrying 'away' games only is as follows. . . .



	Dropzone	Sanxion	Xeno	ScoobyDoo	Cobra	Full Throttle
RIGNALL	—	—	4	3	3	4
PENN	—	—	2	1	4	4
STONE	4	4	3	4	—	—
DUNN	3	3	1	2	—	—
VALDUCCI	2	2	—	—	1	1
EDDY	1	1	—	—	2	2

THE OVERALL CHAMPION

Without doubt, it is Stone who deserves the Accolade, Smash or Sizzler crown as overall champion, not the revolting Rignall. For Stone gains maximum points on 'away' games three times — on *Dropzone*, *Sanxion* and *Scooby Doo*, while Rignall only gains two overall victories on 'away' games: *Xeno* and *Full Throttle*. Rignall begins to sulk as I announce the full results — his ego is apparently more bruised than his neck, which bears strange contusions as the results of some strange passion the spindly one indulges in regularly.

Overall, the ranking based on 'away' points is as follows:

STONE	15
RIGNALL	14
PENN	10
DUNN	9
VALDUCCI	6
EDDY	6

Clearly, Stone is *Victor Ludorem* — the contestant with the highest score and the most 'away' wins to his credit.

On a team basis, ZZAP! and CRASH, as befits the senior magazines in the NEWSFIELD stable, come out best — joint leaders with 24 points collected by their reviewers. Both the ZZAP! and CRASH teams collected 3 away wins, 3 away 2nd places, 1 away 3rd place and 1 away 4th place. The AMTIX! teamsters trail hopelessly, with a total of 12 points between them and 4 away 3rd placings and 4 away last placings.

The final words must go to Richard 'Dick' Eddy, explaining his magazine's loss of honour: "I just don't play games — that's all there is to it!". Unless, of course, they are cute and cuddly games featuring large, cute, colourful creatures. Pah! He makes my lubricant filters clog. . . .

Heap Trendy. The man who came top poses in athletic style



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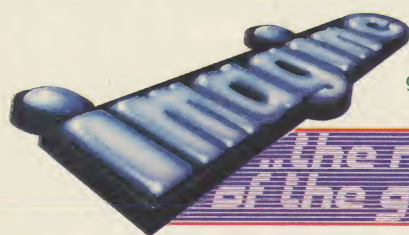
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ART FOR ART'S SAKE . . . MONEY FOR GOD'S SAKE?

When the original IMAGINE bubble burst back in the summer of '84 the company's employees became redundant overnight. From the ashes and confusion rose a phoenix, DENTON DESIGNS, a programmer's co-operative set up by Ally Noble, Steve Cain, Graham 'Kenny' Everitt, John Gibson and Karen Davies — essentially, the team which worked on IMAGINE's ill-fated 'mega-game'. The company produced a number of innovative games, including *Shadowfire* and *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*, and quickly earned a reputation for original, high quality software.

Early this year the jungle drums of the software industry beat out a rumour: the DENTON DESIGN team was breaking up. Apparently, the founder members had peeled away from the company to pursue their own interests. So what did happen to DENTONS? Julian Rignall travelled to Liverpool to find out what went on, and what's going on . . . original programs are getting a bit scarce nowadays — licences seem to have taken over.

The first port of call was the offices of DENTON DESIGNS, situated in the heart of Liverpool's equivalent to Harley Street. Although only one founder member remains, graphic artist Ally Noble, the new DENTONS is still very much a co-operative consisting of six people: Ally, John Heap, Andy Heap, Stewart Fotheringham, Dave Colclough and Colin Parrott. The company is alive and kicking. So what happened during the so-called split?

The directors, Steve Cain, Karen Davies and John Gibson all wanted to go freelance', Ally Noble explains. 'They didn't really want to work with the company, but wanted to work for themselves. At the time it looked as though everyone was going to pack in and give up, but we decided not to'.

John Heap takes over the story, 'I think they were a little disillusioned with the amount of profit actually going into their pockets and they reckoned they could get twice their wages if they went freelance, which I think is true. After they left there were rumours saying that the DENTON DESIGNS team had split up, so we sent out lots of letters dispelling the rumours that DENTONS had

died. We were back in business within a week.'

Which rather implies that the people who remained behind are less money orientated and, perhaps, see games designing more as a labour of love . . .

Ally points out their philosophy 'if we wanted more money we'd all go freelance and drive around in our Porsches.' John chips in: 'I think you really have to commit yourself, especially when you consider how much time you actually put into the game. When you weigh the effort against the money it's really just a pittance that we earn.'

DENTON DESIGNS is a name that has become associated with original material — a reputation the new team intends to build on as Ally explains: 'we see ourselves as people who are here to do our own stuff and not things like conversions.' John continues: 'when you're working on a game the idea for the next one starts forming in your head . . .'. Ally agrees, 'yeah, and then it gets bounced around the office. The idea for *Bounces* came out of *Frankie*. I think the whole thing is a sort of progression.'

John is currently doing a lot of

background reading into a game set in Ancient Egypt. 'We tend to do a lot of research into our games. You get more into it if you do.' Ally says, 'for the *Great Escape* I watched the Codditz series and went out and bought a load of military models.'

RACING A MINI

It's all very well coming up with brilliant game designs, but surely the sheer volume and complexity of ideas must be limited by the target machine's capabilities? Spectrum programmer John shrugs his shoulders, 'it's a bit like racing a Mini instead of a Porsche. You can only go so fast but you can become better at driving the Mini than you are at driving the Porsche. You can get just as much fun out of driving the Mini fast as you can driving the Porsche faster. . . .

'I'd like to do a 128K game,' he admits 'not just more screens, but I'd like to push it like you push a 48K Spectrum. It's the same processor and same machine it's just the graphics potential is much bigger—bigger sprites and map size. It's really sad at the end of a 48K game where you want to put in a few extra little tricks but you haven't got the memory.'

Ian, a Commodore programmer, joins in. 'With the C64 it's a case of finding new tricks you can do with the machine, but it is annoying to have to throw out ideas because you can't get the machine to do them.' Stewart Fotheringham, another Commodore specialist, agrees: 'the big problem with the 64 is the actual speed of the processor.'

John laughs. 'If you look at the Commodore you have sprites and all that and you think 'what am I going to do with them'. On the Spectrum you have none of those, so the actual thought about how the machine is to be used is much more diverse—you get things like *Knight Lore*. If the Spectrum had died a death and the Commodore was reigning supreme I don't think you'd ever get anything like *Knight Lore* games.'

John mentions *Knight Lore* with a certain amount of respect. Do the DENTON members pay attention to other games on the market? John: 'Not much really, we're not really games players. We're a bit insular really.' Ally takes over: 'we went to the PCW Show and there was nothing which really impressed us. Oh, the title screen on *Alleykat*, that was nice.'

In response to the question 'which DENTON game were you least pleased with?', Ally instantly retorts 'definitely *Transformers* . . . it's really a personal thing, we all like different products, but I think *Transformers* was an embarrassment'. 'We were a bit over a barrel and we had to do it.' John admits, 'There wasn't much you could do with the subject matter of the program . . . we did our best.' Nobody says anything about *Roland Rat* . . .

So why don't the DENTON team launch a label in their own right to avoid *Transformers* type problems? Ally shakes her head . . .

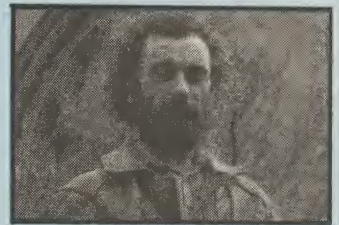
Everyone who was in the CANVAS offices at the time crowded round Kenny's STAR TREK demo on the Atari ST ▶

'We don't know anything about marketing,' John says. It boils down to money: 'there's also a problem with cash flow—we wouldn't get any money for six months, and we'd have to pay people in the meantime. We may do something like that in the future with one game perhaps being financed by another company. We don't really know all the tricks and all the wheeling and dealings. I think we're all a bit naive really.' There may be room for compromise, as Ally explains: 'we wouldn't mind trying some joint publishing, where we put in the development and somebody else puts in the marketing skills and then split the profits half and half. I think we'd have to get a lot bigger, though. Small is good.'

FLYING SOLO

If small is good then John Gibson, programmer of *Gift to the Gods*, *Cosmic Wartoad* and *Frankie*, has gone one better. After splitting from DENTONS he pursued a solo career under contract to OCEAN.

'I'm mainly doing licenced programs now,' he reveals. 'I'd like to do original programs, but OCEAN seem to be dead wary about releasing original games—you're guaranteed to sell a licenced product. If you want to do an original product it's got to be really convincing. I don't really like doing arcade conversions—they're nearly always pale imitations of the original—there hardly seems much point in doing them.'



John Gibson

He's just finished work on *Gali-van*—so why does he do conversions if he sees so little point in them?

'When I started five years ago I did it because it was what I enjoyed. Now I tend to think more about the money than the art form. Mind you, that wouldn't stop me for working for less if the job made me more enthusiastic.'

Was the break from DENTONS a good move?

'Oh yes. I've got rid of the responsibilities of looking after other people. If anything goes wrong I know it's my fault. It's a bit lonely, especially when I've been working alone in my flat for a couple of days, but I do go down to DENTON and CANVAS for a bit of company. I suppose that's what I miss. When DENTONS started it was a very close-knit company. I was one of the founder members, and a Director. It was great when we started, and we had loads of ideas about being a software development house.'

'At first it was like us versus the rest of the world, but after a while both Steve and I got disillusioned. There was too much turmoil in the office with too many meetings. All I wanted to do was write programs and I felt that I was getting too wound up by the difficulty of running a company. I did want more money, so when David Ward of OCEAN, after approaching me several times, made me an offer I couldn't refuse, I left.'

So money, or rather lack of it, seemed to be at the root of the DENTONS split. Was this the case with the rest of the original crew? It was time to travel eight miles up the Southport road to visit CANVAS, a regular haunt for the other three original Denton Designers. . . .



The new DENTON crew—
after risking life and limb to get
through a ruined church and
pose against a mausoleum. . . .



ADDING COLOUR TO THE CANVAS . . .

Located above a large supermarket with a car park that is apparently the source of a significant proportion of Liverpool's crime figures, CANVAS is a new company set up by Steve Cain and ex-Argus Press Software programmer Roy Gibson. Recently they contracted 'Kenny' Everitt to develop the Atari ST version of *Star Trek* (for BEYOND) and Karen Davies, like CANVAS founder Steve Cain, regularly freelances for the company.

Steve explains the financial motives that lay behind the DENTONS split: 'The thing at DENTONS is that we couldn't, as individuals, earn enough money for ourselves. Looking back, at the time of the split, we really had no choice. DENTONS cost too much — it was a bit of a luxury and self-indulgent. I've been a lot happier since.'

'Originally the idea was to wind the company up, but we handed it over and now it seems to be doing really well. We did some good stuff which I'm proud to have worked on, and they're doing good stuff now. Some of the guys they've got there now are brilliant — Colin Parrott is a genius. But I felt I just couldn't work with them any more.'

Kenny airs his view. 'At DENTONS we were making X pounds. Now we're working for ourselves, we're making X times three. The theory with DENTONS was that we'd take on a load of extra programmers and we'd make money out of those programmers. We'd get so much money from employing them we'd be able to pay the overheads, pay them and there would be a bit left over for us. In practice we were subsidising the extra programmers. Although we haven't got a public reputation now, the people that matter know who we are. As long as the publishers know who I am, I don't give a toss about the public.'

Karen Davies looks rather perturbed, and exclaims 'that's not a very nice thing to say . . .'

Unrepentant, Kenny continues . . . 'Yeah, but it'll never be like the pop industry. Jeff Minter's about

the only exception, but then how many people bought *Colourspace*? It doesn't matter what you write, it's what sort of licence you get. Look at *Bounces* — that has eight frames of animation when the player falls over. Nobody noticed that — it was dead smooth cartoon animation and nobody noticed it. Nobody cared about the flicker-free animation. Things like that are so annoying.'

Turning to the function of CANVAS, Roy explains what the company aims to do. 'We are a commercial programming agency — we don't really intend to do our own stuff, not straight away at least. What we're about is doing conversions for other people. We just churn away. Perhaps next year we'll have enough money in the bank to allow us to take the chance and do something original. At the moment we find coin-ops the best thing to do — our artists can start work straight away and everybody else knows exactly what is expected of them.'

'At the moment, we don't have the reputation that DENTONS have. We've been talking to companies such as BRITISH TELECOM who have given us stuff to do like *Star Trek* — now that's a stepping stone for us.'

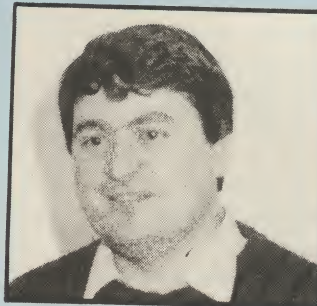
'Anonymity isn't a thing we're really bothered about, not this year. Why should we splash CANVAS all over a licenced conversion? An original program we're working on at the moment, *Wizard War*, will go out with our name on it. We might even publish it ourselves, we don't really know . . . we'll have to see how it goes.'

Kenny Everitt agrees. 'It's just like the early DENTONS stuff which went out with a minuscule credit on it. Any customer would have thought it was produced by David Ward.'

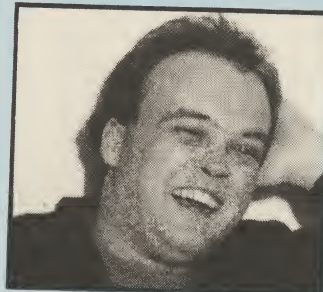
Were they pleased with *Frankie*? Steve replies 'it was nice being the programmer, but the hassles in doing it were tremendous, it practically broke DENTONS.' 'Frankie was really original, different . . .', Kenny adds, 'I'm not blowing *Frankie*'s trumpet especially, what

I'm saying is that there is really nothing else like it'.

'The problem with doing your own thing is that it's all down to a matter of personal taste. I think *Bounces* is the best thing I've done. Gameplay wise it was far superior to *Frankie* or anything else around at the time. As a two player game it was brilliant, but it was a marketing failure. The Spectrum version of



ROY GIBSON:
'Licence deals annoy me . . .'



STEVE CAIN: 'DENTONS cost too much — it was a bit of a luxury and cost too much'

Bounces was a complete load of rubbish — the difference was about three months of playtesting.'

Steve continues the story behind the DENTON days. 'We got into a bit of trouble over *Transformers* with OCEAN which we managed to do in the end — we were all under so much pressure. I designed it, so I take all the blame for it. It was the worse game DENTONS ever did, and

it was the biggest seller. That tells you a lot about the computer industry doesn't it?'

Roy continues on the licence theme. 'Licence deals annoy me. We lose directly in proportion to the size of the licence. If you're on a royalties deal publishers screw you substantially. What they say is 'we've got a brilliant licence and are guaranteed 100,000 sales, therefore we'll pay you less royalties because you don't need them.' You ask for a lump sum and they say they haven't got enough money left over because the licence cost so much, so their priorities are 'pay for the licence, then worry about the programming' — so how can the game be any good?'

Steve doesn't totally agree . . . 'I think the only good licence I've seen recently is *Cobra*. The graphics are really bloody great, but the game hasn't got much to do with the film. *Frankie* was another one, a lot of thought went into that. The software industry could be generating brilliant characters and licensing them out to films and TV, but look what happens. We end up having to write a game about some crappy American TV series. It's the wrong way round.'

'Licences do take money out of the industry which should be left in. I'd like to get out of games and move into the film industry using videos and computers and all that stuff. That's what I want to do oney had a lot to do with the DENTONS split. The individual programmers who came together to form the original DENTONS are still working within the industry, and we can expect some interesting products in the near future: it's just the motivation behind the programming effort that has changed — in some cases, quite radically.'

But the split was an amicable one — at both DENTONS and CANVAS it was difficult to decline invitations to a Mega-Party scheduled for that evening which everyone from the original DENTON DESIGNS crew had been looking forward to.

Sadly, I had to make my excuses and leave. Shame really, everyone said it was a great party. . . .

ocean



Crash
Competition

WIN A SOFTWARE WARDROBE

It's a hard life being a Competition Minion. Apart from trudging up and down the stairs in CRASH Towers carrying sacks full of your mail and then opening all your competition entries and choosing winners, I'm at the beck and call of

the Girlie Tipster and the CRASH crew, day in, day out.

I have to run down to the sarnie shop and fetch them supplies of grub every time they get the tiniest bit hungry. I'm sent off to the laundrette to wash their nasty, dirty

clothes for them at lunchtime while they put their feet up in the office and drink tea — while I'm lugging great dirty sacks of washing up and down Ludlow's longest, steepest hill. In the evening I have to sweep every floor in the Towers, wash up all the dirty coffee mugs and empty all the wastepaper bins.

Now The Powers That Be have opened another office on the other side of Ludlow I'm forever running across town from one building to another with 'important' pieces of paper, like notes to Auntie Aggie asking for three empty Jiffybags or a 'Skyhook' or something. Half the time, when I get there and ask for what I've been told to go and fetch, all Aggie does is collapse in a fit of giggles, say she's run out and send me back for a jar of elbow grease or something else totally obscure. It's not fair I tell you.

Mummy Minion has a terrible time keeping my clothes clean and smart for worktime. Every day I come home drenched in sweat from all my exertions and covered in grime, sarnie crumbs, ink that's rubbed off from your letters, coffee grounds and dust. I've only got a couple of changes of clothing, so Mummy Minion is up to her elbows in soapy water nearly every evening.

Which is what gave me the inspiration for this competition. I thought it'd be a great idea if some lucky readers could have a massive collection of trendy clothing to wear in 1987. So I set about asking lots of software houses to give a T-Shirt or two to my prize fund. Lots of them have, and in fact I've

managed to amass a large collection of garments. The winners of my personal Christmas Competition will have a T-Shirt, Sweatshirt or some other item of clothing to wear for virtually every day of the month! And there are a few other goodies in the prize package as well, like mugs, hats, posters, scarves and games, calculators, calculator watches, and even a sports bag is on my list of seasonal goodies. The Powers That Be at NEWSFIELD also agreed to chip in — three CRASH subscriptions and three CRASH binders are on offer, as well as T-Shirts and Sweatshirts...

Three sets of prizes are available. One 'Large' person, one 'Medium' person and one 'Small' person is going to collect a Minion's Goodiebag as a result of this competition.

To keep you puzzling over Christmas, I've devised a special, giant-sized wordsquare that contains the names of lots of software houses — most of whom have popped a product of two of theirs into my monster collection of prize material. Just to make things that tiny bit difficult, I'm not going to give you a list of the names you've got to find — so get to it.

Ring round all the company names you can find in the wordsquare, fill in the coupon and send your entry direct to me: MINION'S GOODIEBAG, C/o The Broomcupboard, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB so that it arrives before 20th January 1987.

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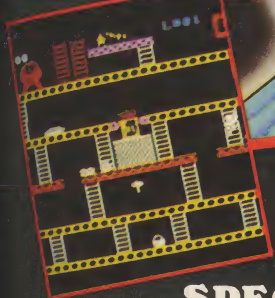
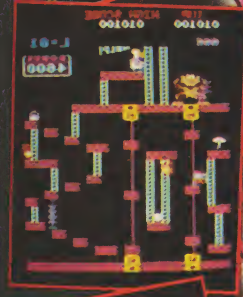
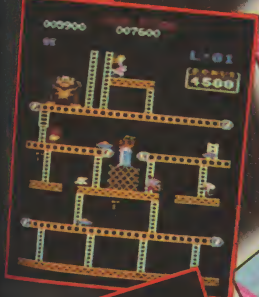
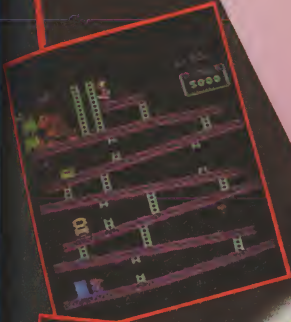
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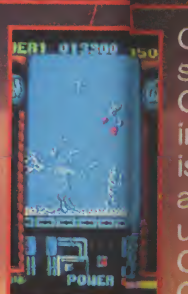
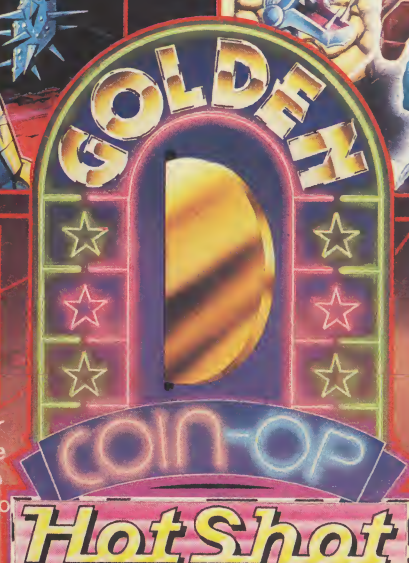
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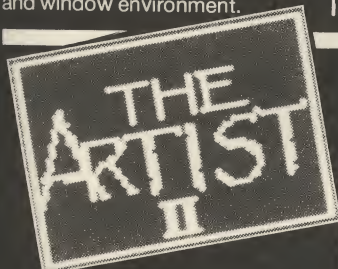
TECH NICH E



After a short break from these pages, **FRANCO FREY** makes a comeback and gets into the desktop publishing possibilities offered by **THE ARTIST II** — the utility written by Bo Jangeborg during the creation of **FAIRLIGHT II**. He's impressed . . .

ARTIST II

Back in September '85 **SOFTTECHNICS**, a division of **SOFTK INTERNATIONAL**, launched a graphics package that seemed to make any other type of utility redundant. *The Artist* had some really excellent facilities which made it stand out from the crowd, but was sadly put in the shade by the launch of *Art Studio* from the now defunct software house, **OCF**. *Art Studio* brought a fresh whiff of Macintosh air to the Spectrum with the introduction of the mouse and window environment.



The cassette contains *Artist II*, the graphics designer program; *Sprite & Font Designer* — utilities to create (still or moving) sprites and fonts; *Page Maker* — the program which could have reduced Eddie Shah's loan requirements (and probably his colour resolution), and *Screen Compressor*, the Scrooge of memory.

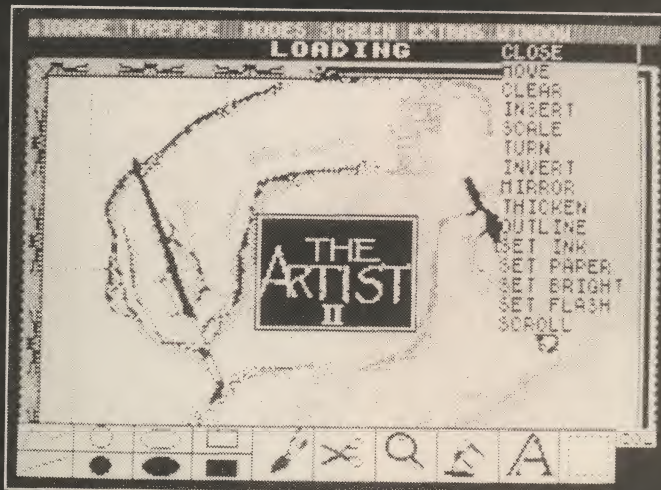
First of all, the question of hardware compatibility; *Artist II* file handling copes with the **OPUS** disk drive and the Sinclair Microdrive as well as the usual cassette recorder. Configuring to disk or Microdrive media provides access to features such as **CATaloguing** and **ERASEing** from within the program. Other interfaces may be accommodated, as **SOFTTECHNICS** thoughtfully have a **BASIC** driver routine, that allows softies such as me to change the load, save and verify instructions to suit the specific hardware. In fact, in view

SOFTTECHNICS have now come back with a vengeance, launching *Artist II* which combines the multitude of revolutionary facilities of the original with the now obligatory mouse-come-window technique. *Artist II* should mouse itself to the top of the league despite the strong contender, *Art Studio*, which is now marketed by **RAINBIRD**.

of the review period, I even managed to save *Artist II* on Microdrive by altering the **BASIC** cassette load header.

Moving onto mice, *Artist II* will work either with the **KEMPSTON** or the **AMX** mouse. Less fortunate users will be pleased to know that *Artist II* happily can be operated from joystick or keyboard using **Q,S** and **I,O** keys for direction and **N** and **M** keys for setting/selecting or erasing. Joystick freaks without a **KEMPSTON** joystick interface can get their rusty old programmable interfaces out of the cupboard.

On the printer front, things are not so easy . . . *Artist II* is designed



The front screen to **THE ARTIST II**, showing the pull-down menu system

to work immediately either with the **KEMPSTON 'E'** printer interface or the **OPUS** Centronics output of the disk drive. Strangely, *Artist II* seems to neglect the **AMX** mouse Centronics port altogether. Here comes my first and only gripe. Neither **AMS**, makers of the **AMX** mouse, nor **SOFTTECHNICS** provide any useful information to the unfortunate user wishing to access the Centronics interface. This is more annoying since **SOFTTECHNICS** have made it possible to modify a simple **BASIC** program.

Some help could have been provided in initialising the printer interface and setting up the correct printer commands. Perhaps a look at the competition wouldn't be such a bad idea — *Art Studio* allows you to enter the appropriate code to change the line pitch and set up the 8-bit graphics command; information which can be gleaned from the printer manual.

Having sorted out the hardware aspects, it's all song and dance. All functions are accessed via a mouse and window technique. Fixed origin and concatenated (**LMLWD**) lines, circles, ellipses and boxes are available in the selected brush mode and with and without fill routine. Drawing is accomplished according to the selected drawing mode, accessed in the **MODE** window. This can be set for mono work without affecting the attribute data in inverse, over or normal mode, either with solid fill or pattern fill, or in colour mode, with the preset colour choices.

There are three ways of changing colour. Selecting palette in the **MODE** pull-down menu provides for entry of ink, paper and border colour with choice of bright and flash. Similarly, pointing and clicking the colour swatch at the bottom right of the screen shows the same result. The last option is to

use the keyboard: 1 and 2 for ink, 3 and 4 for paper, 5 for bright and 6 for flash. Different brush sizes can be selected by clicking the brush icon.

Thirteen brushes are available, including 8 square, 1 round, 2 italic slant, a spray can effect and a blank brush. The blank brush is useful for filling areas without hard edges. The brush patterns can be redesigned with the font designer residing in the **EXTRAS** menu. Painting and filling areas can be done by using any of the 28 patterns, which include a solid and blank pattern. Again, patterns can be redesigned. Up to six different fonts are available in text mode. Each font can be redesigned using the font designer in the **EXTRAS** menu. The brush designs are held in font 6.

Detail work is best dealt with using the magnify mode. The screen is divided into two areas, the normal-sized image on the left and the magnified image on the right. Pointing and clicking the mouse over the area to be worked on moves the magnification to that spot. In normal mode the screen is partly covered by the icon selections. Access to this area is reached by scrolling the screen up or down using the **SCREEN** menu. Full view of the screen is gained with the **VIEW** function. An **UNDO** function avoids any dramas of wrecked pictures due to silly mistakes. To avoid clearing wanted work it is best to **OK** the current state of the picture from time to time.

The **STORAGE** menu provides all the functions for saving and loading of screen designs and fill patterns. It also provides output to the **ZX** printer or dot matrix printer. Two different print sizes are available. Apart from the straightforward dumps there are also two grey scale dumps with stippling effect

PAGE MAKEUP

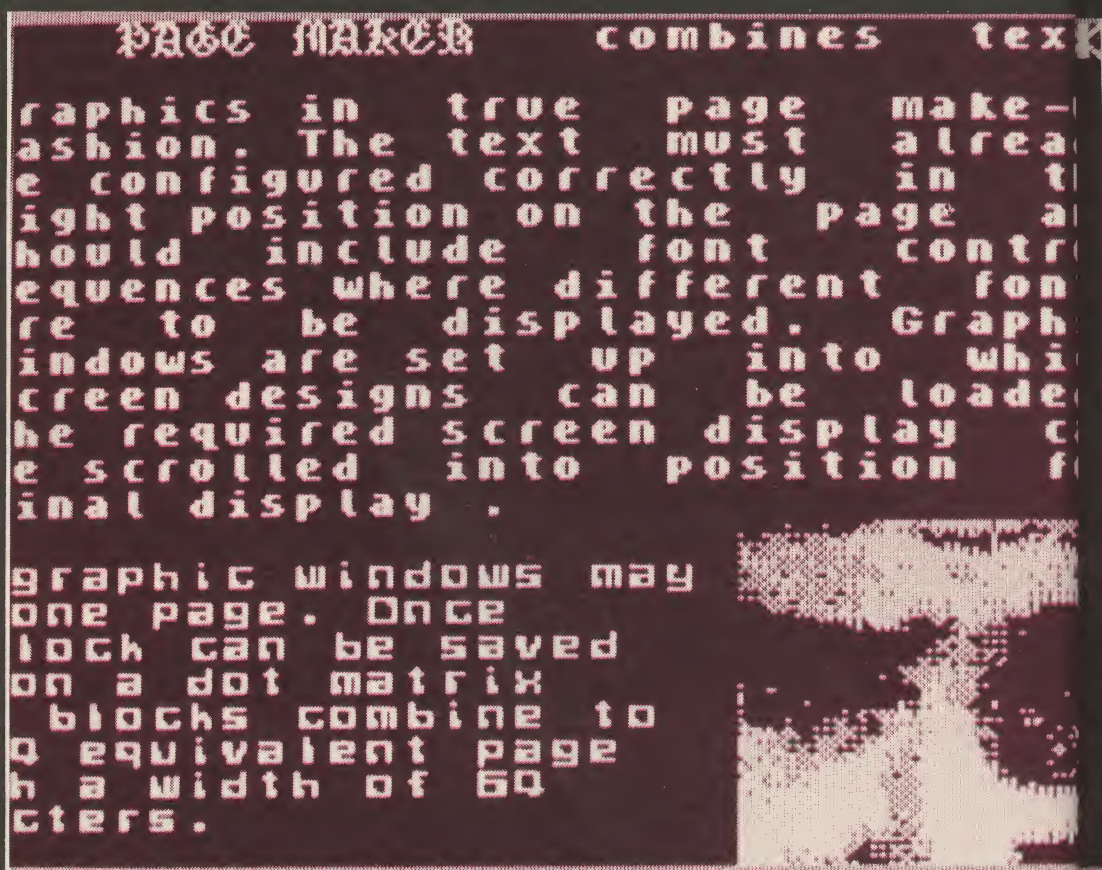
If electronic looks could kill...

Ever since Eddie Shah, who brought the merits of electronic page composition to the national newspapers of this country, computer page makeup has tumbled from the megabucks mainframe environment right down to the top-notch personal computer scene and everyone with an inspiration of becoming a Murdoch Kidd (sorry, —ED, I just couldn't resist) has had to buy a new Habitat desk to support their Desk Top Publishing hardware, with which to ambush a willing or unwilling readership. Coming soon at your local Spectrum... Yes, included in this package is *Page Maker*, which lets you create a full size page of text and graphics on an equivalent area of 96 lines of 64 characters length.

No, you're quite right, it doesn't fit all on one piddling Spectrum screen — you have to work on 4 separate blocks of two screens. Each set of screens is printed out at a time. And no, *Page Maker* does not drive a laser printer, yet... Spectrums driving laser printers, that'll be the day!

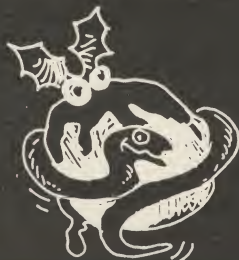
giving a mono representation of the colour screen display.

The two real beauties of *Artist II* are the CUT and PASTE and the WINDOW facility. CUT and PASTE provides the facility of cutting out any shape segment from the current screen or from a saved screen design and transferring it to any location on the existing screen. The cut-out can be scrolled into position, inverted, mirrored, turned, blended or mixed into the main screen. To help with the cutting out of the image there are circle, line and fill functions to tackle the most complicated segments



to be transferred. Screens to be composed from any screen source on record.

WINDOWS provides a set of functions which manipulate a screen sector designated by a window boundary. Using the window icon a relevant screen area is framed and a number of functions



Combining an image captured by a video digitiser with text written on *THE WRITER*. Eddie Shah, eat your heart out!

are at your disposal to manipulate the specified area: this includes functions such as CLEAR, TURN (90 degrees) INVERT, MIRROR, SCROLL within the window and global setting of paper and ink colours. Special functions include THICKEN, which thickens lines and dots within the window area and OUTLINE, which outlines any change of ink and paper (excellent solarising effects). INSERT allows insertion of another screen detail from storage and is equivalent to the cut & paste option.

PAGE MAKER

PAGE MAKER combines the graphic facilities of *Artist II* with the text facilities of *The Writer* to provide a modest Page Makeup system. *Page Maker* can handle a print area of 96 lines 64 characters wide which represents approximately an A4 page. Due to the restraints of the Spectrum screen the work is divided up into 4 blocks of two Spectrum screens side by side providing a scrolling display area of 24 lines by 64 characters.

To begin, load the text from a *Writer* file. Forward planning is required, as the text has to be laid out in advance in the correct position within the specified display area.

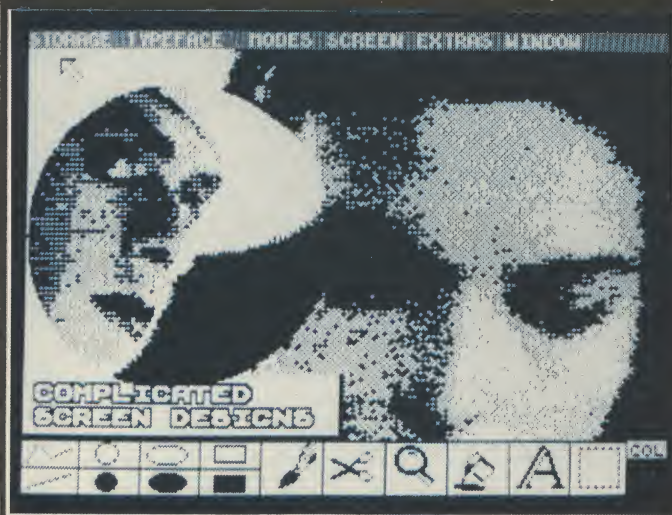
Page Maker supports up to 5 character sets called up via special font commands embedded in the *Writer* file. Similarly, special commands provide underline and inversion of text.

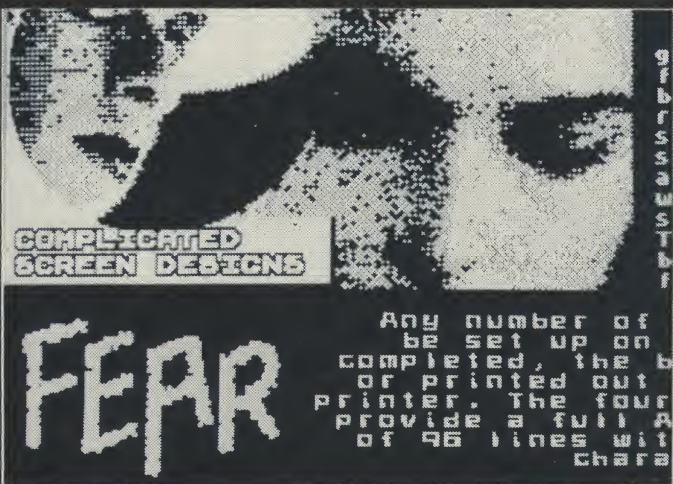
Once the text is in place, blocks of graphics can be inserted by creating window areas and loading previously generated screens. The graphics can be scrolled into the correct position and fixed. There is no limit to the number of graphic areas on the 2-screen block area. When satisfactory, the block can be output to the printer and the next block tackled. Each block can be saved to tape or disk/cartridge for later use.

SPRITE MAKING

The *Artist II* package includes a very useful sprite and font designer — *Sprite II* — which allows creation of up to 6 x 6 character square sprites. It provides the facility of loading a complete screen design and grabbing only certain areas for the sprite design. The sprites can be animated by displaying the individual sprite frames in sequence at various speeds, and the sprites can be mirrored, inverted, scrolled, thickened and outlined. Sprites can be finally saved as raw bytes for further programming.

A *Screen Compressor* is also included in the package, which reduces memory requirements for





Five elements have been edited together to produce this Spectrum screenful — two images captured by a video digitiser, two large logos and some text from a WRITER file. . . .

screen designs.

Summing up, *The Artist II* is the most comprehensive graphics utility on the Spectrum scene. The introduction of the mouse and window technique has improved its

user friendliness, but keyboard slaves need not despair: operating the variable speed cursor without mouse or joystick is just as much fun. *Artist II* rightly deserves a CRASH SMASH!

Producer: Softek International Ltd.

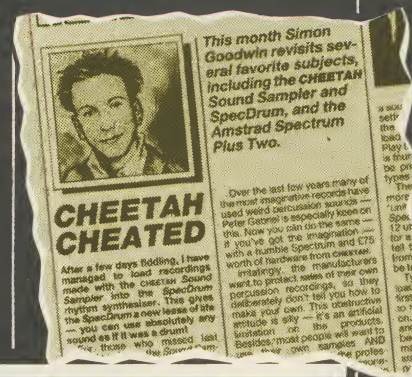
Price: £14.95 for 48K version, £17.95 for 128K version (soon to be released)

S-S-S-SAMPLE S



JON BATES presents the musician's viewpoint of the **CHEETAH Sampler** and looks at a similar product provided by DATEL as an improvement on their early sampler. All this and a feature on music earlier in the magazine. . . . busy boy indeed!

First of all, let me wade into the wake of last month's **TECH TIPS** and round up on the **CHEETAH Sampler**. Simon Goodwin summed up the technical side and gave it the thumbs up. To be fair, what we both had was a pre-production unit, and several of its idiosyncracies have now been ironed out. These were mainly to do with the way in which the program was arranged, especially on the editing side. However, there are several things that I feel could be improved on.



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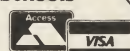
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S-SAMPLE

Having captured your sample, you are presented with the editing screen which only shows you very short sections of the sound. The object of the editing page, funnily enough, is to allow you to edit. This is a problem, since you can't see the whole sound at one go. I understand that at least now you are able to hear what you are editing, but again only the section of the sound on display. 'Grr' is what I say — it's far quicker to see the whole sound shape in one go, then zoom in having roughly positioned the cursor where you wish to edit. Also I found that if you bungled and wished to reposition the cursor, it meant copying the sample into another file and starting from scratch.

The sound quality is quite good, although a little bit more noisy than necessary perhaps. **CHEETAH** have included a repeat facility, mistakenly called 'sustain', which means that any section of the sample can be made to repeat: 'Crash' could become 'Cra-a-a-a-sh' or 'C-C-C-C-C-rash' or even, 'Crash-sh-sh-sh-sh'. Great. Like it. The repetition is achieved by holding down the key for as long as you want. One annoying thing is that the whole sound sample replays when you hold down the key, even when the 'sustain' facility is disabled. Unless you want to sound like a road drill, you have to leap up and down on the keys like a cat on a hot tin roof. Why not have this as an optional function?

The filing system is good and unwanted parts of samples now can be made to relinquish areas of memory to give you optimum use

of available memory. Silly niggles are that the documentation is written for the nearsighted and illogical. On the plus side, I understand that plans are afoot to make it impossible to plug in the power supply by accident, by means of a subtle change of the case design.

Overall, **CHEETAH** get a clean bill of health for this product, which they hope will emulate the *SpecDrum* in terms of sales. Mr Goodwin will doubtless have further wrinkles up his metaphoric sleeve to bind these two products together. And there, as Hamlet puts it, lies the rub. Strangely, **CHEETAH** seem to have gone out of their way to make their sampler and digital drum equipment incompatible in terms of swapping samples — the first rule of buying products in this area is to make sure that there is room for expansion and compatibility...

Neither the *SpecDrum* nor the

sampler have MIDI options as yet. However, all is not lost. My moles have been busy at work and have told me that **CHEETAH** are developing not only a MIDI interface, but also devices which will allow you to connect the sampler to a MIDI keyboard — polyphonically at



that. Maybe they'll consider doing that for the *SpecDrum*. "But I haven't got a MIDI keyboard." Never mind, **CHEETAH** will sell you one that will plug into any MIDI module or even the 128's sound chip. Seems reasonable — watch this space for a review as soon as possible. And speaking of reviews...

DATEL SOUND SAMPLER

Producer: **Datel Ltd**
Price: **£49.99**

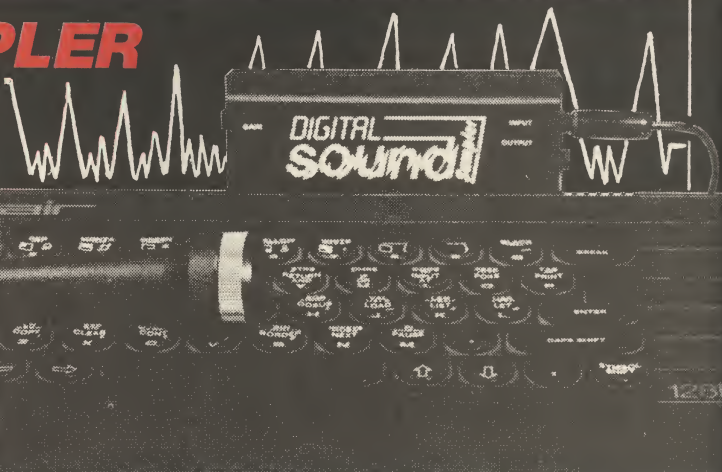
We first reviewed the original **DATEL** Sound Sampler way back about June 1985. This is the 1986 upgrade (alas we had only the 48K version), and I'm sorry to report that there really isn't a large amount of improvement. Okay, it's not so noisy and the reproduction of the samples is notably better, but I really think that **DATEL** could have also put some effort into the software and presentation of the package, especially as the sampler 'war' is hotting hot with **CHEETAH** and **RAM/FLARE** getting in on the act.

So what do you get for your 50 notes? The usual hardware box and cheapo microphone plus software. Load up and away we go. Big "oops" here as you're only told how to plug in the incorrectly labelled hardware at the END of the instructions — and I'm still baffled by the little trim pot on the back. The options are very much

the same as the old **DATEL** product and work very much in the same manner — with a few extras.

Record uses an automatic sound sensor that triggers the sampling above a certain threshold of sound. Trouble is, it's too sensitive by half and is not adjustable. **DATEL** seem to think that you are blessed with three or more appendages as you need to hold down the 'R' key during recording. Great for things like guitar, flute and anything percussive where two hands are needed — not to mention one to hold the microphone. As it is so sensitive and awkward to use, you often have great big gaps before and after your sample.

The technical wonder of actual sampling is not so wonderful anymore, and we should now demand easily manipulative facilities from any self-respecting sampler. What ain't we got? That's right. You can't do a damn thing with it as regards editing. The unit will actually show you the wave of the sound sample — just like the orig-



DATEL's SOUND SAMPLER: set up and ready to start taking samples. . . another anonymous black box to plug into the back of your computer

inal version did: this option was useless then, and it still is. The lack of editing really relegates this product to the second division.

Four Part Sound one ray of hope is the option to record four different sounds and play them back from the numeric keys. This is fine, but you can't alter the pitch in this mode of operation.

Playback the playback mode proper is quite good in that it displays a static piano keyboard on screen to be played from qwerty keys, and it has an amazing 9 octave range which will defy the human ear. Anything you play is automatically stuffed in a real-time sequencer which will play back your first 100 notes (albeit not quite as faithfully as **DATEL** might claim, as the timing alters from your version). I would suspect too generous a quantisation here — that is, the 'rounding up' function found on drum machines to correct minor timing errors.

Sounds may be played in reverse or stuffed through some novelty features like 'Riser', which replays the sample 8 times at a higher pitch each time, or 'Chop

Play' which replays the sample 8 times at the same pitch only shortening the length of the sample on each repetition. I'd rather have some editing instead of the digital whoopee cushion provided by these redundant features.

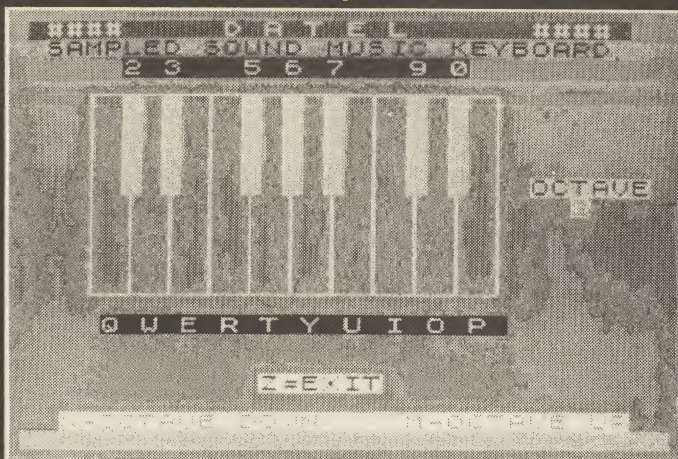
Echo offers nine preset echo effects. You have to return to the main menu each time to change them — rather annoying!

Microphone Level Tester simply routes the signal straight through to the the output and to your amplification.

Load/Save samples can be dumped to tape or Microdrive.

In practice, you have very little control over what the **DATEL** sound sampler does. Sure, it samples and does some party tricks with the sound, but you, the user, are pretty well subservient to some dogmatic software with very little room to manoeuvre. There is no MIDI option or synchronisation facility and on the light of other samplers now available, this package is very bovine indeed. It demands some drastic software rewriting to justify its price in face of the competition.

The on-screen keyboard display from DATEL's sampler — play back your sounds and be moderately amazed . . .





RED BOXES

Guest techie Paul Gardner takes a look at what could be the ultimate add-on for your spectrum. It's all in a little Red Box from ELECTRONIC FILM SERVICES

What do you think is the ultimate add-on for your home computer? How about another computer... New from ELECTRONIC FILM SERVICES LTD is the **Red Box system**, a home computer specifically designed for household automation and security.

The **Red Box** system starts as a set of three devices that you can plug into your household mains supply. **Red Leader** is a small computer system with a built-in programming language. This can communicate with and control the other two boxes supplied with the starter package: **Red One**, effectively a mains extension lead with an enclosed remote control relay, and **Red Two**, a thermal movement sensor that can detect the movement of people within a room and transmit this information to **Red Leader**. The devices communicate with each other by transmitting radio frequency signals along the mains wiring in your house.

The system arrives neatly packed in polystyrene and each device is a self-contained unit which simply plugs into any standard three-pin mains socket. Each device is fitted with a quality moulded plug which also contains a fuse of the correct rating. Instructions are included on how to change these plugs if your house has non-standard sockets.

A slim (50 page) manual is included which gives very clear instructions on how to set up the equipment. For the Spectrum this is very simple. Power up your computer in the usual way and enter the command **LOAD ""**.

Connect the enclosed lead, which is similar to a standard cassette lead, to your Spectrum (red plug in the EAR socket) and the other end to **Red Leader**, then plug in **Red Leader**.

The computer in **Red Leader** detects which type of home computer it is connected to and starts up accordingly. On the Spectrum, this means that **Red Leader** sends a program from itself to the Spectrum as if it were a cassette player. The program auto runs and you are presented with a menu screen like that shown in **Figure 1**.

I had no trouble getting this far with the system and I was quite amazed to see the signal being sent from **Red Leader** to the Spectrum at precisely the correct 'volume'.

There are two ways of operating **Red Leader**: you can use the menu driven system or you can write programs using the built-in BASIC programming language. The Spectrum is only used from here on as a keyboard and screen for **Red Leader**, and as a route for

program storage — programs written in Red BASIC can be saved to tape via your Spectrum.

The menu system shown is very easy to use. It lets you tell the computer about new devices on the system and allows these devices to be turned on and off via the SET option.

Each device has to be 'installed' by telling the computer the device's security code and logical address. As this is a fairly tedious process to have to repeat, you can save all the current device information to tape using the KEEP option from the menu.

From this menu you can set devices to switch on and off at specific times of the day. The system has its own built-in clock which has to be set each time **Red Leader** is powered up.

It is also possible to make one device dependent upon another. For example, you can arrange for whatever is plugged into **Red One** to be switched on whenever **Red Two** detects a movement.

As the starter pack only contains two controllable devices, the applications are fairly limited. It is possible, for example, to have the system switch your electric blanket on and off at preset times every day — or you could use both devices to give you an 'intelligent' porch light... anytime someone moves close to the sensor a light can be switched on.

If you want to use the system for more complicated applications you will need to purchase some of the optional extra devices available and also learn how to program the system using the built-in BASIC.

Figure 2 is a listing of a BASIC program that I wrote to have the system perform as a simple home security device. The two devices in the program are referred to as **ALARM**, for the mains powered alarm bell that I plugged into **Red One**, **SENSOR**, for the thermal movement sensor and finally, **SENSW**, for the small reset switch which is built into the movement sensor.

This set up worked as follows. I would arm the system by connecting the Spectrum to **Red One** and running the program. The Spectrum can then be disconnected as it is no longer required. The movement sensor had a field of view that covered my front door and hall. On the way out of the house I had to walk past the sensor, so as I passed it I would press the small switch located on the sensor, thus gaining 10 seconds to leave its field of view.

The program is written so that I can gain entry to my house without setting the alarm bell clanging.

Figure 1



Figure 2

```
10 REM SAMPLE PROGRAM
FOR HOME SECURITY
20 FOR N = 1 TO
DEVICES:ERASE 1:NEXT N
30 REM SET UP ALL THE
DEVICES TO BE USED FOR THIS
APPLICATION
50 LET NORING = 0: REM
STATUS FLAG
60 READ NUMDEVICES
70 FOR N = 1 TO NUMDEVICES
80 READ N$,A,B,C,D
90 INSTALL(N$,A,B,C,D): REM
THIS INSTALLS THE DEVICE
100 LET ST = TELL(N$,OFF):
REM RETURNS NON ZERO IF
NOT PRESENT
110 IF ST = 0 THEN GOTO 160
120 PRINT "CANNOT COM-
MUNICATE WITH-":N$
130 PRINT "PLEASE INVESTI-
GATE"
140 INPUT "PRESS ENTER TO
CONTINUE":A$
150 GOTO 100
160 NEXT N
165 REM SET UP EVENT HAND-
LING ROUTINES
170 WHEN 2 GOSUB 210: CON-
TINUE
180 WHEN 3 GOSUB 310: CON-
TINUE
185 REM THERE IS NO ACTUAL
PROGRAM JUST WAIT IN A
LOOP
190 GOTO 190
200 END
210 REM EVENT HANDLING
ROUTINE FOR THE MOVEMENT
SENSOR
230 LET RING = TIME 10
240 IF TIME RING THEN GOTO
280
250 IF NORING = 1 THEN GOTO
280
260 TELL("ALARM",ON)
270 LET NORING = 0
280 TELL("SENSOR",OFF)
300 RETURN
310 REM EVENT HANDLING
ROUTINE FOR SENSOR
SWITCH
330 LET NORING = 1
340 LET DELAY = TIME 10
350 IF TIME DELAY THEN GOTO
350
370 RETURN
380 DATA 3: REM 3 DEVICES
390 DATA
ALARM,1,860849,2,1628250627
: REM CODES FOR RED ONE
400 DATA SEN-
SOR,1,204976,1,781711363:
REM CODES FOR RED TWO
410 DATA SENSW
,1,204976,2,781711363: REM
RED TWO SWITCH
```

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When I return to the house the sensor detects my movement, but gives me a delay of 10 seconds during which I can press the small switch on *Red Two* to disable the sensor for a further 10 seconds. This gives me time to leave the sensor's field of view. Then I can leisurely stroll upstairs, reconnect the Spectrum and stop the program. Unfortunately, the sensor is so sensitive to thermal movement that one of my cats was sufficient to set the alarm off!

THE HARDWARE

Red Leader is a fully functional computer with a 6502 processor, a 6220 VIA, 16K Bytes of ROM (an EPROM in the review model) and 8K Bytes of RAM used for program and data storage. You need to connect another home computer to it to provide you with a keyboard and screen.

In all three devices there is one chip which is the heart of the communications system, an LM1893N. This is a mains transceiver which transmits serial data on a radio frequency carrier wave along the household Earth and Neutral wires. The range of communication mainly depends on the amount of outside interference, but I tested the review model along the length of a long suite of offices

detecting my presence providing I approached head-on. It ignored me until I was less than two feet away.

The devices communicate very reliably with each other and seem to be fairly insensitive to the household appliances that usually generate interference (drills, washing machines and so on.)

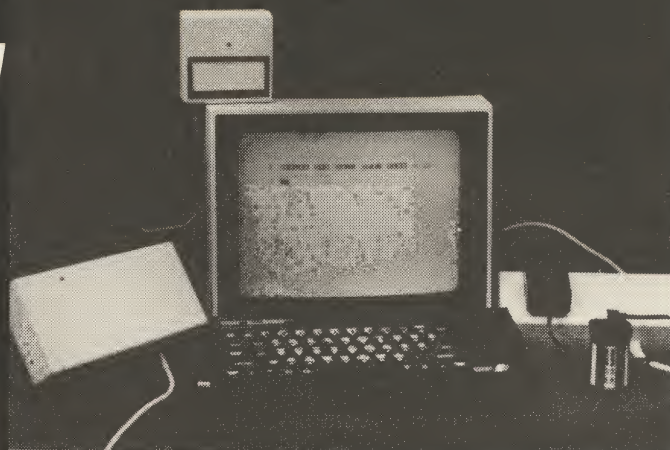
THE PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE

Red Leader supports a powerful programming language which has the feature of being 'event driven' by the external devices. That means that you can have a program running, and whenever one of the devices sends a signal to *Red Leader* it stops what it is doing and executes a subroutine relevant to that device.

You program the subroutines for each device and can activate or deactivate 'interrupts' from these devices at any time.

The language is very similar to BBC BASIC but it is an Integer only version of BASIC. Various commands utilise the screen handling capabilities of the computer you are using as the keyboard and screen for *Red Leader*.

The BASIC supports long variable names and is fairly fast — it



The RED BOX team in formation. . .

the new one worked fine.

The circuit boards in *Red One* and *Red Two* are very neatly done and don't appear to have any last-minute fixes on them.

In practical use, the most frustrating aspect of the whole system is the Spectrum. (Don't complain yet!) The problems lie not with Spectrum but with the machine code program that has the Spectrum act as the *Red One* terminal. Apparently, an ex-Sinclair programmer wrote most of this code and then left it unfinished for some other unfortunate programmer to complete.

It is quite an appalling piece of code. Judging by its operation. The keyboard appears to have been so thoroughly 'de-bounced' that you cannot type faster than four character per second on it. If you want to repeat a key, the auto repeat occurs almost a full second after the first key press and repeats at about half-second intervals. So it takes about four seconds to back-space over an eight character spelling mistake!

I talked to one of the technical bods on the *Red Box* team who explained some of the reasons behind these problems. He assured me that they would be sorted out in a later model.

The Spectrum implementation also does not let you send anything to the printer (a programming language that doesn't let you list the program on paper!) and when you try and save a program written in Red BASIC to your cassette (Microdrives not supported) the *Red Box* downloads the program into the Spectrum memory and then prompts you to swap the *Red Box* leads over with your cassette leads before supplying the prompt 'press any key to continue'. However, it doesn't wait for you to 'press any key'. It just starts the tone immediately. So you have about half a second to swap the leads over and release the pause button on your cassette recorder.

I was so amazed at how bad the practical aspects of using the Spectrum were that I had a go using the *Red Boxes* on another computer, the BBC (Hiss!). Not surprisingly, it worked beautifully — keyboard type-ahead, printer, disks — everything you would expect.

Suspicious characters might be tempted to think that the *Red Box* system was developed for the BBC and had been hurriedly amended to support other machines in order to capture a wider market.

When speaking to some of the designers of the system, I learned that they intend to release another two versions of *Red Leader* to overcome some of these problems. The next version will have a 32K Byte ROM and should be able to contain some better terminal routines for the machines supported.

Yet another version is intended to have a straightforward RS232 interface and so be able to communicate with any computer that supports a simple ASCII terminal program.

FORTHCOMING EXTRAS

As the original system is clearly limited in scope the designers have several new *Red Boxes* planned which can be added to the basic 'starter' system.

Red Alert is intended to be a fully-functional burglar alarm control system, which will be battery backed and capable of communication with *Red Leader*, providing inputs from simple window and door switches.

An RS232 unit is envisaged to allow you to let different home computers communicate with each other or devices like printers along the house wiring at a speed of 2400 baud.

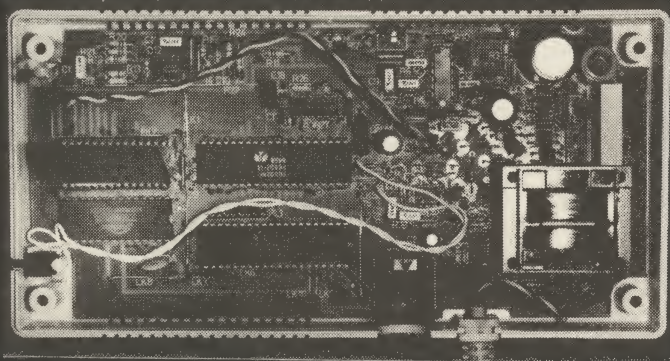
Finally a 2 channel A/D converter unit under development will take inputs from simple analogue devices like temperature sensors and communicate the information to *Red Leader*.

CONCLUSION

Clearly the *Red Box* system is under development. At £130 for the 3 unit starter pack I don't think it has much to recommend it to Spectrum users until the problems with the terminal emulation program are sorted out. When the manufacturers take the Spectrum seriously enough, and when there are a few more devices available, we'll take another look.

PRICES

Red Box starter system: £129 including *Red Leader*, *Red One* and *Red Two*
Extra Units: *Red One* and *Red Two* £35 each
New Units: prices to be announced.



Inside RED LEADER — the chipper-pokery that talk to the Red Squad and co-ordinates their efforts

— certainly, you should have no problem in a standard size house.

Red One contains a mains socket which is connected to its mains input via a 16 amp relay. This relay is controlled by *Red Leader* but the setting can be switched locally by using a small reset switch on the side of the box. This small switch is set flush to the surface and is unlikely to be pressed accidentally.

Red Two contains a thermal detector, the fluctuating output of which is used to detect thermal movement. This detector is housed at the centre of a crude plastic lens system to give it an extended field of view. If *Red Two* is mounted in the corner of a room it can detect movement almost anywhere in the room except directly below the unit when it is mounted above head height. The detector is particularly sensitive to movement from side to side across its field of view, but I could approach *Red Two* without it

also has some element of structured programming support by having REPEAT-UNTIL loops and event-driven interrupts, but for reasons I shall explain, I don't think many Spectrum users would attempt any 'serious' programming on it.

PROBLEMS

The review model I received was supposed to be a full production version and not a pre-release model, but inside *Red Leader* there were some fairly messy hand-wired 'patches' on the circuit board. The first *Red Leader* I was sent stopped working after one day of intermittent use, and investigation showed that the main capacitor on the low voltage power supply was not actually soldered in place, but simply rested in the lead holes in the board! However, a replacement was sent within a day (well done GPO) and

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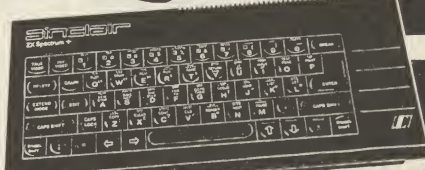
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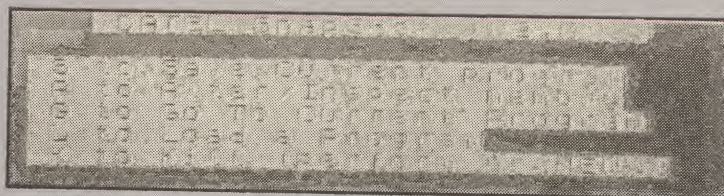
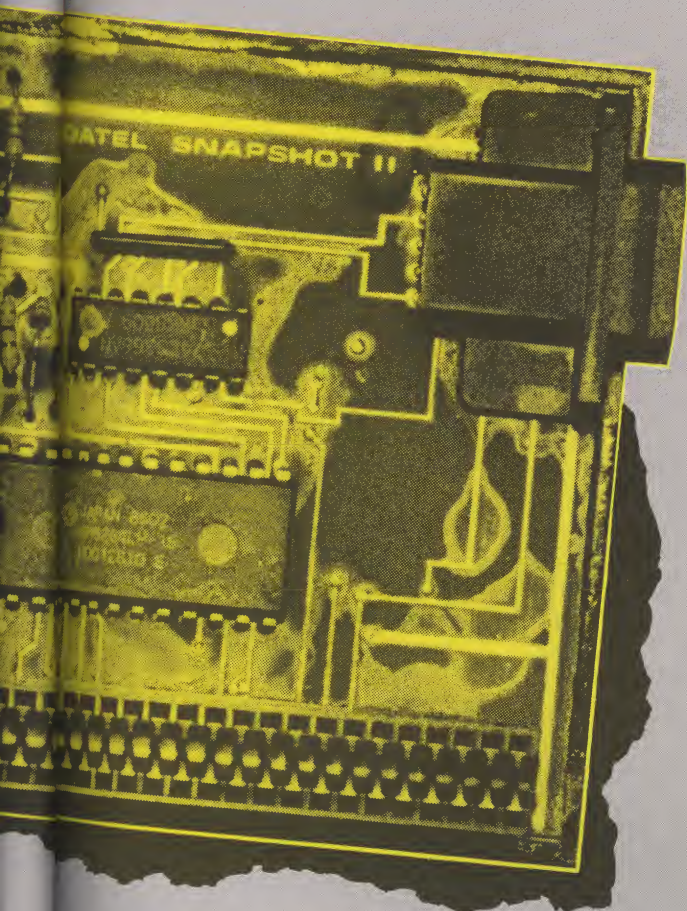
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Press a key now.....

mal or hexadecimal. You must type a hash character at the start of the address if you want to use hex. Press ENTER on its own to get back to the main menu.

The next option, **G**, lets you go back to the current program — the top part of the display is restored as if you had never pressed the button. You can only return to the exact point at which you stopped the program — you can't jump to a specific address.

The **L** option is used to load a file that has been saved previously

with **S**; ENTER on its own loads the next file in this case, but you can break into the load in the usual way.

K 'kills' the current program, resetting the computer but leaving the *Snapshot* routines in memory.

TESTING

The biggest problem with the *Snapshot* is that it doesn't seem to work with most commercial programs. I tried it with a collection of

games, and **VORTEX**'s aging *Android 2* was the only one that was transferred properly.

Snapshot can compress programs to reduce their disk or tape storage requirement, and *Android 2* was condensed into a single 29K file, including the screen, in 25 seconds. I'd like to give more examples, but I didn't manage to copy anything else!

On The Run, from **DESIGN DESIGN**, and **MICROMEGA/Derek Brewster's Codename Mat** started to save, but the screen filled with gibberish after a few blocks had been written to Microdrive and the only way out after that was to pull the plug.

I spent quite a while re-loading these games and trying again, pressing the button at various points after loading, but I never managed to save anything useful. At one point I pressed the button while *On The Run* was playing and the machine crashed without even printing the *Snapshot 2* menu — about half of the 'Alter' menu appeared, then my trusty Spectrum locked up.

I tried to transfer **CHEETAH**'s *SpecDrum* program to Microdrive;



this is a prime candidate for conversion from tape. Again the machine spun the drive for a while, then locked up. Repeated attempts gave the same result, so I used **ROMANTIC ROBOT's Multiface 1** — the only other such utility I have — and everything went smoothly. If *Android 2* had not copied properly I would have suspected a duff *Snapshot* interface. Since *Multiface* copied the test programs without trouble it seems likely that there's something wrong with **DATTEL's** software.

SNAP DECISION

Snapshot 2 has a lot of competition, and it doesn't seem to work very well. Unless you're very short of cash, and you only want to convert simple programs, I can't recommend this product.

GENIE



ROMANTIC ROBOT have been selling a *Snapshot*-type device for a while now. Their *Multiface 1* is something of a Rolls Royce compared with the *Snapshot 2*, and has a price tag to match — five pence short of forty quid. The *Multiface* consists of an 8K ROM and 8K of RAM, providing the instant SAVE facility for most disk and tape systems, plus options to examine and

POKE memory. It can also call any address or print out the screen display. Besides the magic button you get a through port for other peripherals, a Kempston joystick socket and a switch to make the interface undetectable to the computer.

One very nice feature of this system is the way that you can load your own applications into the 8K RAM, independently of the standard 48K, and call them up at will while a program is loaded. **ROMANTIC ROBOT** give full instructions to help you do this, although the facility is only available to machine-code programmers.

ROM-ROB have just launched a package that uses this feature; as such it is worthless unless you've got *Multiface 1*, but I have found it so useful over the last few weeks that I think it might even justify the purchase of a *Multiface* to some people, especially keen hackers.

The package is called *Genie*. It lets you stop and start any program at any point, and examine its operation in great detail. In effect, it is a small but well-designed machine-code monitor that is compatible with absolutely everything. *Genie* costs £**., and consists of a cassette, containing about 5K of code, and six neatly-printed, well written A4 pages of documentation.

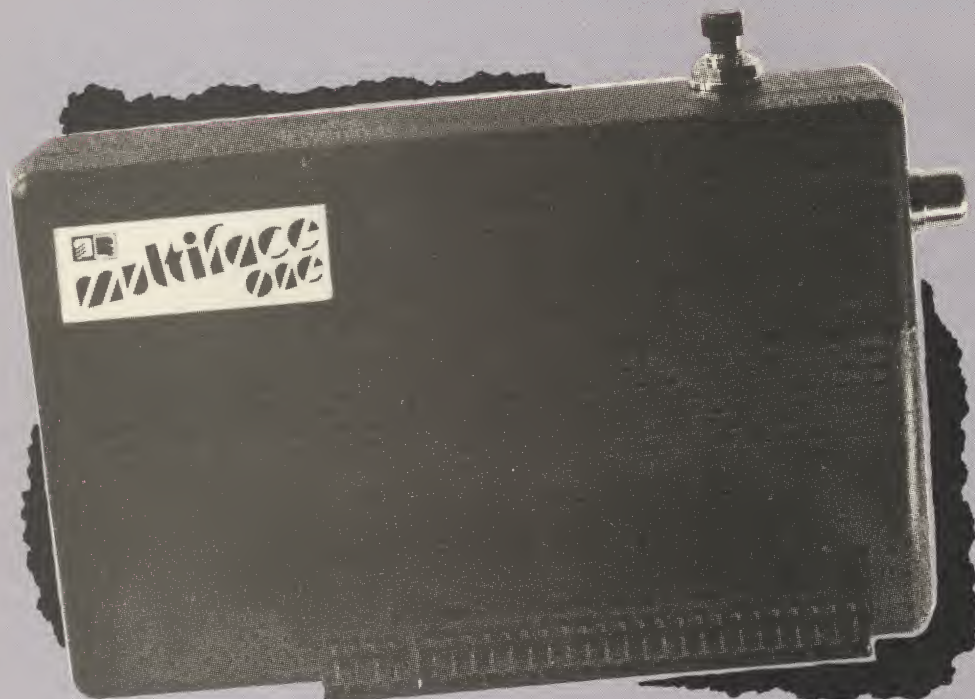
Genie loads into the RAM on the interface — the instructions tell you how to copy it to Microdrive or disk and configure it for different printers; *Genie* will print via any device connected to the Spectrum's channel 3, including the ZX printer, the Spectrum 128 serial port, and most plug-in interfaces. You must tell the program whether or not your printer expects 'line-feed' characters at the end of each line.

Once *Genie* is installed you can

call it up by pressing the red button. Instead of the usual *Multiface* menu, an eight-line window appears at the top of the screen. You can call up the normal *Multiface* menu by typing BREAK as you press the red button, but you MUST reload *Genie* before you press the button again.

Everything *Genie* does appears in the eight-line window. The colour-scheme is bright but readable unless your telly is playing up — characters are white on red or black on yellow. The top part of the window lists keys that work in most modes, while a two line menu bar carries the main options, rather cryptically listed as 'DIS', 'TEXT', 'NUM', 'Z80', 'FIND' and 'RET'.

Z80 shows you the values of all the Z80 registers, including the program counter. You can alter any value, and turn interrupts on or off, but you can't display or change the interrupt mode. So



what, I hear you say!

FIND will search the whole 48K RAM for a sequence of up to 24 bytes. Searching is very quick, and you can step from one match to the next by pressing a key. This is great for looking for specific instructions but not so hot for messages, because the values to be found must be entered as numbers — not text.

DIS is a full Z80 disassembler — a routine which converts stored numbers into machine-code mnemonics, whether or not they are really part of a program. You

can start and stop disassembly at any address.

DIS has several nice features — it sifts out the 'error code' bytes which follow RST 8 instructions, and decodes the undocumented Z80 instructions, like SLL C and SUB A, IXH, which confuse lesser disassemblers. The display can be made to scroll continuously or print a new line when you press ENTER. At top speed, or if you hold the key down, the information rolls by very fast indeed.

The TEXT option is similar but interprets memory as characters. Unprintable codes appear as full stops. TEXT is very useful if you

feel like changing a few messages in your favourite (or least favourite) program. NUM prints the numeric values in memory.

All of the *Genie* options let you switch from decimal to hex input and output at any time: this is achieved by pressing the H key. The border colour changes from blue to cyan to signal which number base is currently selected. Addresses actually change their form on the screen when you press H!

It takes a while to get used to the way *Genie* accepts numbers — you don't have to press ENTER if you type the maximum number of characters (five for a decimal address or three for a byte value.)

I found it a little irritating that leading zeroes are always printed.

You can print the contents of the window at any time by typing C for Copy, and relay all output to the printer between presses of P. The G option lets you go backwards through the memory; it takes DIS a few bytes to work out what has happened thereafter, but most disassemblers have this quirk.

You can change any data in registers or memory by pressing A for Alter, as corresponding values are displayed. You're asked for an address, but ENTER gives the last one examined. You have to type new values as single-byte numbers.

Finally, the 'RET' option returns you to the program that was interrupted, restoring the old display on the top 8 lines of the screen. If you have altered the value of the PC register, the program re-starts at the address you set. The instructions illustrate how you can return directly to ZX BASIC.

There are a few missing features that I would have liked, such as conditional search and replace and some facility to enter text directly into the machine, rather than as numbers. However, *Genie* has to fit into the Spectrum's memory map with the *Multiface* ROM and 48K of program to be examined, and the limited space has been well used.

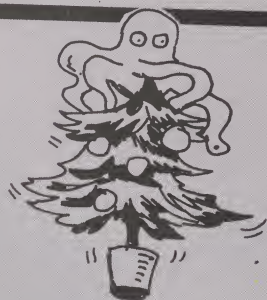
Real hackers will love *Genie*, but it's pretty meaningless unless you understand machine-code. It will not necessarily be useful for debugging your own code, unless your programs are so large that there's no spare RAM for a conventional monitor. However, it is absolutely wonderful for getting inside someone else's code. If that's what you enjoy, you'll find *Genie* a very professional tool — simple, effective and unique.

POSTBAG

I only finished writing my column for last month's CRASH about half an hour ago, so please bear with me if I don't mention your most recent letters till next issue. The weird world of magazine publishing means that I'm writing this late in October, in order to get some words in the shops before reindeer-hooves hit the slates!

Anyhow, several people have written in with comments about the Spectrum 128. According to Darren Millin and someone with no address and an indecipherable signature, the best way to persuade programs to run on the new machine if they don't load properly is to load them on an old 48K Spectrum and transfer them to tape or Microdrive with some 'magic button' type of interface — both my correspondents used *Interface 3*. Apparently most programs will work fine if you re-load the saved file into a 128 set to 48K mode.

This tip will certainly by-pass a



lot of the protection mechanisms that tend to stop programs running on the 128, but it won't cure the problem with interrupts that I dealt with in a past column. Still, it's worth a try if you buy a game and then discover it won't load directly into the 128.

Anthony O'Neill has discovered that games for the Spectrum 128 will load into a 48K machine. He has tried the two games bundled with the old 128 and found that *Neverending Story* would not just load, but run as well! The trick is to press SPACE when loading appears to be complete and the screen is filled with gibberish. The prompt 'Press Space to continue' should appear. Do as you're told,

and the game will run, although most of the graphics are scrambled and the exits are wrongly labelled. Unfortunately *Supertest* just stops with an OK message if you try to load it on a 48K machine.

We noticed that the cassette format was unchanged when the 128 games first arrived at CRASH, although we didn't realise that *Neverending Story* would actually run in 48K. Programs that use the extra memory load files in the normal way, but 'page' the extra memory between one file and the next so that code is loaded by writing to an output port. I gave the exact details of this mechanism in June.

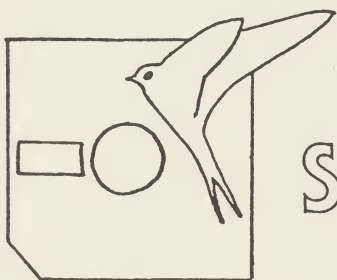
Anyhow, the old Spectrum just ignores the instructions to switch between ports, so successive lumps of code or data get loaded one upon another, into the top 16K of memory. As long as the switched pages only contain data, the program will work okay, although it will only be able to use the last lump of information that was loaded into the paged area.

Peter Dalling has written in with good news for tidy-minded Microdrive users. If you consider a

fiver a bit pricey for a TRANSFORM Microdrive storage box, Peter has an alternative. Apparently, electronics firm MAPLIN sell storage drawers that hold cartridges very neatly, that is if you leave the plastic divider in place and add a couple of cardboard spacers. You can fit 30-36 tapes into each box. The MAPLIN part number is F900A, and the price in the 1986 catalogue is £1.48.

And there would appear to have been some form of misunderstanding concerning the *Drum Editor* I reviewed last month. Bob Pearson of CHEETAH has written to both me and Mr Bleakley to point out that *SpecDrum* is a copyrighted name — a name that the copyright holders intend to protect fully. Anyone else planning to write and sell software to run on CHEETAH hardware should bear this in mind.

There'll be lots more feedback from readers in next month's TECH TIPS. If you've invented something fiendish, or if you want to pass on some technical advice, please write to me at TECH TIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SHY 1DB...



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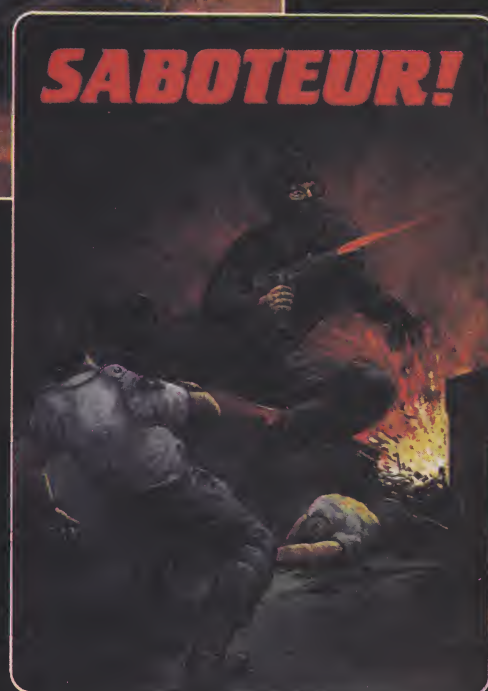
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CLASS OF '86



1986 will not be remembered as the year of the adventure, even if many people, bored with the transient thrills of arcade did suddenly discover the more lasting satisfactions to be found in adventuring. The biggest game of the year, *Lord of the Rings*, based on the famous Tolkien work (and representing the next logical step for MELBOURNE HOUSE who turned *The Hobbit* into a classic adventure), was to many a huge disappointment as it failed to live up to the expectations raised by its pedigree. It was again Philip Mitchell, and again MELBOURNE HOUSE who were wrapping it all up and selling it, but the end product just wasn't in the same league as Tolkien's masterpiece. In a sense, *Lord of the Rings* failure as a major piece of software was symptomatic of a broader malaise in the adventure world, as if adventuring had lost its way and was not quite sure of the path ahead.

LEVEL 9, of course, continued to champion the cause of imaginative adventuring with their much respected releases, *Worm in Paradise* (the final part of the *Silicon Dream* trilogy) and *The Price of Magic*. Their success is justified, as a lot of time and effort has gone into honing their own adventure system to give adventure just as much pride in the technical innovation stakes as arcade. Hand-in-hand with the technical competence is a desire to provide coherent storylines and gameplay so the player becomes as involved with the game as with a good novel. Because adventuring is a more difficult market, LEVEL 9 have quite sensibly diversified as much as possible within their chosen field: versions for each game span almost every known computer, and they have not been averse to dipping their fingers into many different pies, as in their link up with MOSAIC's *Adrian Mole* books. The other big name of 1986 was undoubtedly Fergus McNeill of DELTA 4 who mined quite a different seam. Humour was always an area which the medium of adventuring could develop to its full, and DELTA 4 were not slow in spotting this simple fact. The Quill, for once, provided a useful vehicle to express a budding comic talent. DELTA 4 had always secured a loyal following among adventure freaks, but this year saw the outfit's rise to fame and chart respectability epitomised by the tremendous amount of interest in *The Boggit*, a game which successfully lampoons the MELBOURNE HOUSE classic.

However, in summing up this year it is worrying that a great number of individuals have thought it feasible to set up software houses, and then devote a great amount of time and money to launching Quilled games that are neither innovative nor remarkable in any way. There are two conflicting thoughts which cross my mind as I wade through these games every month. The first thought is one of sadness that anyone can think that a profitable, or even a break-even situation, can be gleaned from such lack-lustre product. But

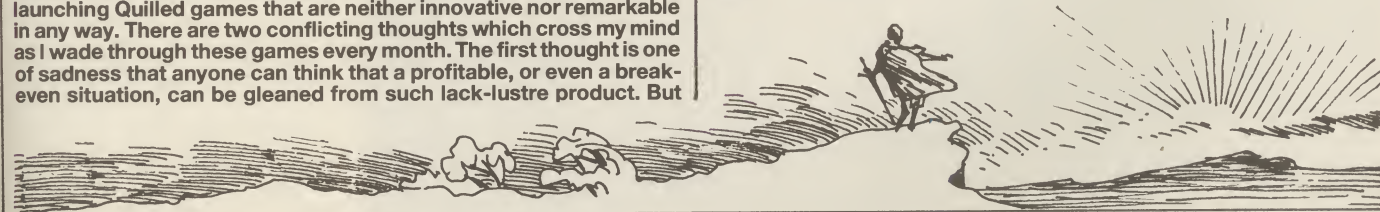
my second thought is one of hope and optimism; if adventuring can stimulate such ground-level enthusiasm in the form of experimental software releases, adventure clubs, and small circulation magazines, perhaps this could be the avenue to encourage the development of really challenging adventures.

From the enthusiast's domain, one or two mail-order products did make it to the larger software concerns and the mass market. In this area there can be no doubt that the advent of budget software has kept adventuring alive when no full-priced games were in the offing. MASTERTRONIC, ATLANTIS (not least with their famous *Mafia* games), and more recently PLAYERS (a derivative of INTERCEPTOR who have recently rejoined the full-priced adventure scene) have all released very reasonable adventures. MASTERTRONIC's efforts are all the more remarkable when their no-Quilled policy is considered. With programs such as ZZZZ, experimentation with icons was not beyond this budget software producer. However, let us not forget a company which saw the same market, and was large enough to rival MASTERTRONIC in sales of budget adventure. FIREBIRD's *Seabase Delta* was an enormous hit, following on the heels of the highly successful *Sub-sunk*.

The mighty OCEAN games empire developed their own adventure system, seen in the competent releases *Never Ending Story* and *Hunchback the Adventure*. This system used the novel idea of forming a colourful collage of backdrop, with events and objects superimposed over it. ACTIVISION turned out the highly impressive if more traditional, *Mindstone*, while PSS and MIKRO-GEN went a little astray in their efforts to try something new with *Swords & Sorcery* and *Shadow of the Unicorn* respectively.

Despite the fact that adventuring has a dated image, with interest in pre-1986 games matching that shown for games of this year, I still think that it has a future. In fact it's encouraging to note that if authors have the presence of mind to mould together innovative programming with inventive stories, they can be assured of producing a game which will be remembered long after arcade games released around the same time are forgotten.

Certainly, as with pop music, tremendous sales are there for those who cynically milk the teen market, but, as with pop music, there are also significant prizes for those who cater for a broader appeal. I hope the success of *Trivial Pursuit*, the computer adaptation of the cult board quiz, is significant, and marks a greater inclination on the part of software houses to look afresh at the whole world of games play.





JEWELS OF DARKNESS

Producer: Rainbird

Price: £14.95

Authors: Level 9



Welcome to Dungeon Adventure, the last of the Jewels of Darkness, from Level 9 Computing. You are on a wide stone bridge leading north to a gaping stone mouth, below which is a mud-bank. What next? N

Jewels of Darkness follows the usual rules of naming software, ie make it sound like everything else. In fact this unoriginal title covers a trilogy of very famous games, games which go back to the very earliest days of adventuring. *Colossal Adventure*, the first of the three, is a direct descendant of the Crowther and Woods mainframe jaunt. This was the bane of many an academic computing fraternity in the late seventies and early eighties. *Adventure Quest*, the second tape, is played out on the same ground as the first, but is a LEVEL 9 original, while *Dungeon Adventure* completes the trilogy with the most original story and feel of the lot.

All three have been completely overhauled and updated since their first release, with extended

text descriptions, enhanced language manipulation, and, most noticeably to a *Colossal* veteran, pictures. Even if these do only amount to the usual LEVEL 9 minimalistic art school, they still add some colour to these text classics.

The packaging is of the very highest standard with full instructions (which even go so far as telling you how to wrestle with the firm plastic casings), and a novella by Peter McBride indicating a high regard and a great confidence in the product by RAINBIRD. I tend to go along with this confidence, as this package, even at nigh on £15, is still superb value for money given the effort to breath new life into these oldies (but extremely goodies).

Presentation is all very well of

course, but what of the substance. Well, what can be said from the outset is, if you haven't played these games before, or if you are thinking of looking into adventuring but don't know where to start, then this trilogy can provide an insight into what makes adventuring great. The stories behind each part, the strong and evocative descriptions of each location, and the clever weighting and interlinking of puzzles and objects provide the fuel to set burning even the dullest of imaginations. One offshoot of the games' notoriety is the ease of discussing the adventure with fellow adventurers, many of whom will have at least tried *Colossal*, so you can end up in animated conversation - much the same as with Tolkien novels.

The features designed to bring these old masterpieces into line with new advances are most impressive. Most immediately apparent is the type-ahead feature; even while pictures are being drawn, the next move can be made. Enhancements in vocabulary include GET ALL or EVERYTHING, AGAIN and RAM SAVE and EXITS.

The sophistication which these commands can achieve together when they are linked by punctuation (or simply by the word AND), is

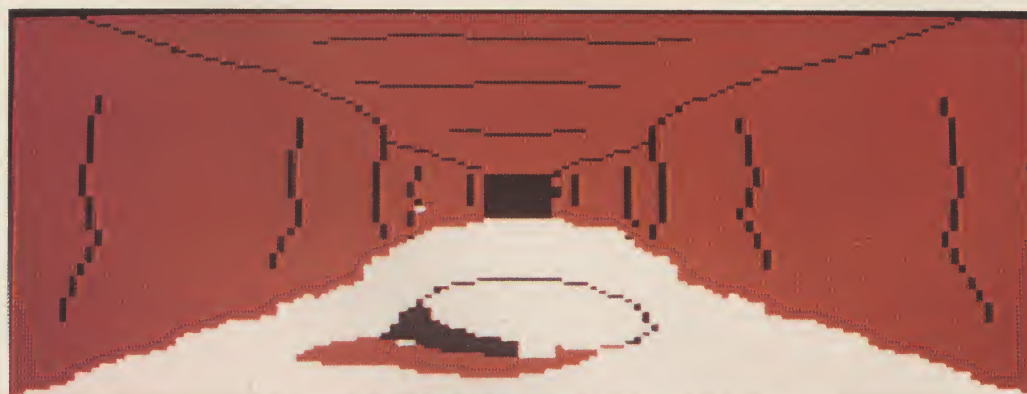
quite remarkable. The GET ALL/DROP ALL command can be used with exceptions as in DROP ALL BUT THE LAMP AND SILVER BALL. The command OOPS, which restores the player to the position before the last move on larger machines, is sadly not available on the Spectrum 48K versions!

In addition to the commands to get you back into the game, the programs also give you an option to be resurrected after an untimely death. To obtain a maximum score, and the title of Supreme Adventurer, the player must complete *Colossal*, *Quest*, and *Dungeon* in that order, carrying the score across from one adventure to the next. Each adventure has its own scoring system and objectives, as we shall now see on our tour of the trilogy.

In the first part, *Colossal Adventure*, the player scores points by finding fabulous treasures and carrying them back to the small brick building at the start. If things are going well, and you reach the *Colossal* Cavern, then you will score more points for entering it. Bonus points are had by making as little use as possible of the SAVE/RESTORE options.

Colossal has you cast as the chap who takes pity on a weary traveller who stops by at your local tavern, and then goes on to free the goodly elves imprisoned in the deep dark dungeons at the end of your quest. The traveller is grateful for your helping him avoid the bandits who would have his money, but instead of proffering you some of his new found wealth, he allows you the chance of searching out your own at the cave which locals have put down as a myth. He gives you a map showing the location of the *Colossal* Cavern, and you decide to chance all and follow it - over mountains, through forests, and past deserts until nearing the cave, you foolishly lose the map in a fast-flowing stream. You must now make your own way to the cavern remembering what the traveller told you - that magic works in the cavern.

In some ways *Colossal* seems the easiest of the trilogy. This may be due to familiarity, or perhaps it's due to the ease of wandering round a great many locations with only a few minor problems to solve. Come to think of it the early part of *Adventure Quest* isn't so difficult either, but perhaps it isn't quite so easy to go as far. Playing both graphic and text versions (the text backs the graphics side of the tape), I noticed that not only is the text side wordier, but in some ways it is easier. Both prompts and location descriptions become more tangible as their lengths increase. For example, on the graphics side, trying to pick up an object when you already have four, results in 'Your hands are full'. On the text-only side however, this becomes 'Your hands are full, you can't carry anything else unless you drop something first'. This is a simple example of what may well prove more valuable, as the plot thickens and becomes more intractable.



round, north-south passage, illuminated by a jet of flame. To the east you can see an overflowing treasure vault. What next? N You are in a north-south passage. A gilt miner's helmet lies nearby. A jewelled crucifix rests nearby. What next? ■



The story behind *Adventure Quest* goes like this. You are an apprentice magician (being under 60 years old) and have taken courses in the three M's (Meditation, Mysticism, and Moneymaking), but you haven't had the opportunity to put theory into practice - until now. You are told 'the base of the demon lord's power has been discovered: he has taken up residence in the Black Tower, on the far edge of the world. Even now the full council is preparing an assault on its defences. But there is a second way. Perhaps one person, acting alone, can find the four Stones-of-the-Elements and use them to enter the tower. There the Amulet-of-Life might help defeat the Demon. As you leave the room you think you hear the shouted order 'Next!'. Dressed in travel clothes you are teleported to a familiar scene.

You score points by getting nearer to the Demon Lord's Black Tower, and more for possessing any of the four Stones-of-the-Elements. There are bonus points for entering the tower itself and winning the adventure. On the debit side, you lose points as time goes by, and more if you manage to get yourself killed. Using SAVE/RESTORE regularly will keep you on your way in what is an epic journey.

The concluding game of the trilogy, *Dungeon Adventure*, goes like this. You awake on a mudbank under a bridge spanning a wide river. Apparently you were robbed and your body left for dead in the river but a current took you to the shore. However lucky you may feel at being alive, all your weapons and magic powers, are lost.

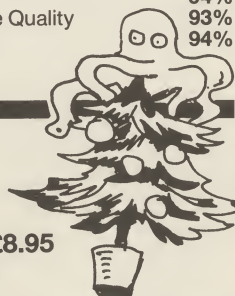
To score points you must collect treasures left by the late Demon Lord and take them to the store room. There are bonuses for getting rid of undesirable beings

(though, to prevent massacre, only the worst enemies give you a bonus score). Getting yourself killed, as usual, loses valuable points. Resurrection is possible, and uses a machine which is initially situated very close to the start of the game. The setting for *Dungeon Adventure* is a cave network which was originally the headquarters of the Demon Lord. Some parts are now blocked off by rock falls, but it may help you to bear in mind the original functions of the accessible areas.

Jewels of Darkness is a classic trilogy and a collectors item for connoisseurs and laymen alike. Given the untold damage to the market, in terms of unimaginative structures and stories, wreaked by the Quill, these programs are at once a return to traditional adventuring and a breath of fresh air. Only allowing the carriage of four objects in the first two games seems unnecessarily restricting, and makes maze-mapping difficult. The bunched up text can be difficult to separate when reading and perhaps a bit of colour within the text wouldn't have gone amiss. The long, atmospheric location descriptions, the clever and entertaining plot, and the super way the whole thing is dished up, makes this package one to remember.

Difficulty: easy to quite puzzling
Graphics: nothing special but colourful enough
Presentation: average, but at least the colours are restful
Input facility: beyond verb/noun
Response: fast General rating: super entertainment

Atmosphere	92%
Vocabulary	95%
Logic	94%
Addictive Quality	93%
Overall	94%



KWAH!

Producer: **Melbourne House** Price: **£8.95**
 Authors: **Simon Price & Mike Lewis**

Although the title of this game is *Kwah!*, perhaps the loading screen title of *Kwah?* is more to the point. The game is too unfriendly to be linked with mainstream adventuring, requiring a very precise and linear solution pathway to be followed to completion. The game however is slick, the graphics very well done, and it does allow all the usual adventure inputs, so what the heck - until someone can say just what this game is I might as well review it here.

The story here concerns an unlikely hero, Kevin, who transmutes into the superhero Redhawk who, naturally enough, can fly. But as the story goes, he is unable to do this at the start of the plot - due to some forcefield around the gates of the Lee Rehabilitation Centre on the out-

skirts of the city. Kevin, who seems to be a journalist onto his own story, goes there armed with tape recorder and press card to find out what happened to him before he lost his memory.

The game commences at 10:27am, and the seconds slowly tick away as you work out what to do with Redhawk at the gates of the Lee Centre. Along the bottom of the screen the game reveals its links to the adventure world: GET, DROP, SAY, KWAH, EXAM, PLAY, STOP, RECD, STO (for STORE), REC (for RECALL) are accessed via Symbol Shift and the numeral keys along the top of the keyboard. Nos 3 and 4 together come up with SAY KWAH, and in this way Redhawk can change to Kevin and vice versa. PLAY, STOP, RECD refer to tape recor-

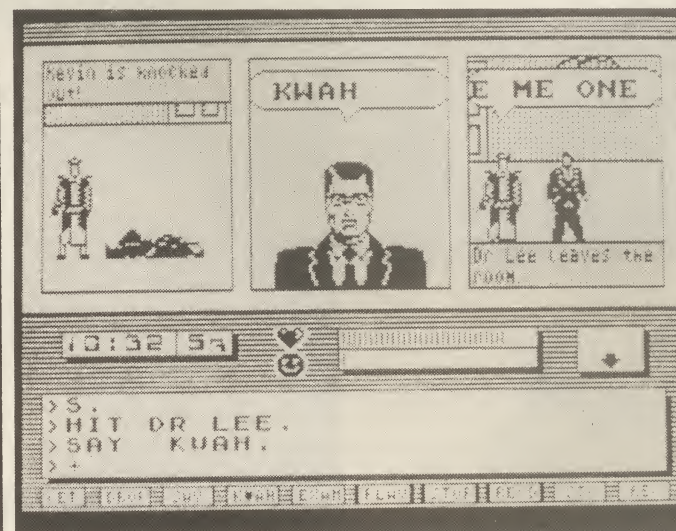
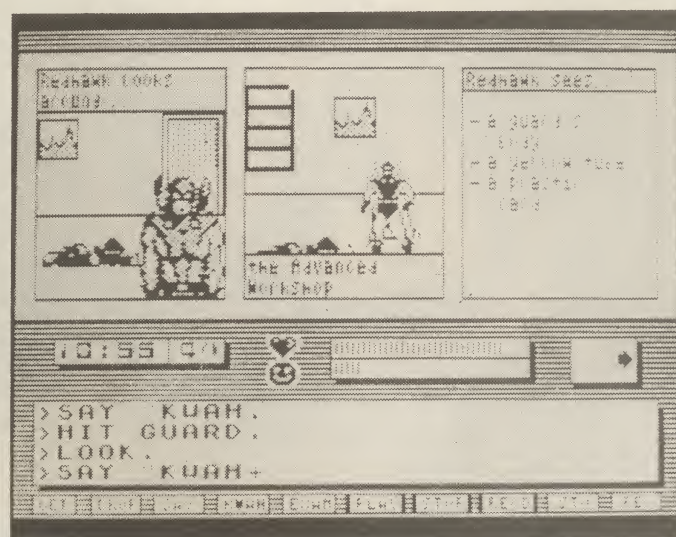
der operations, the rewinding of the tape apparently deemed unnecessary when playing back! STO AND RECALL aren't mentioned in the instructions I received but presumably have something to do with RAM SAVE.

Input is not only achieved by using the keywords provided, but also by typing out words as in any adventure. The language needed to achieve any action is very narrow, or to put it another way, compared to most adventures this game is very unfriendly.

The strength of *Kwah!* as a game lies in its cartoon strip graphics

cession, each one with the print 'Time passes' on it. Direction arrows point out the exits at the present location. Should you input something it doesn't understand, and you'd have to be a genius not to do this every other move, then the program stops counting down time until you press SPACE.

Kwah! is a very unusual game. It will not appeal greatly to mainstream adventure enthusiasts, but will strongly appeal to comic strip fans. Once you accept the games limited vocabulary, you can then sit back and enjoy a highly original and graphi-



along the top half of the screen. The three pictures in the serial are very well done and very true to the atmosphere of a cartoon comic. If you input for a character to say something (even if it's rude), up it will come in that characters speech bubble. Inside the Lee Centre good old Doctor Lee says 'Welcome Mr Oliver', and then, 'Follow me'. Kevin follows Lee until he stops and says 'Well then. . .'. This is where the game slows a bit, but there is a way of speeding it up. If you type in WAIT the program flicks through a great wad of comic strips in quick suc-

cally pleasing game.

Difficulty: difficult
Graphics: excellent
Presentation: excellent
Input facility: sentences and keywords
Response: type-ahead/immediate
General rating: unusual, highly polished game

Atmosphere	95%
Vocabulary	67%
Logic	69%
Addictive quality	88%
Overall	86%

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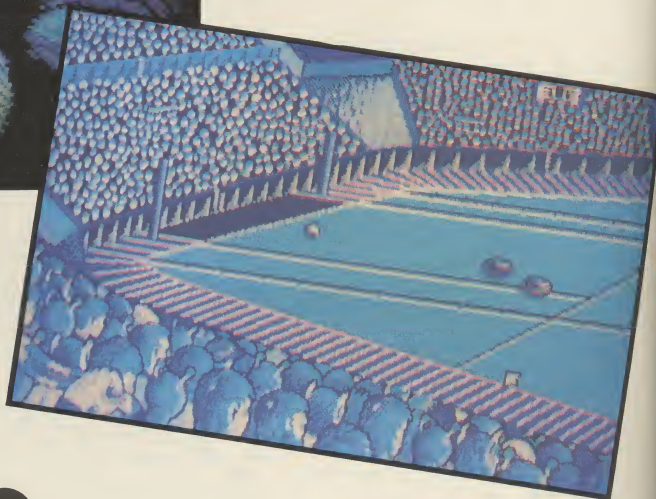


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ADVENTURE

Producer: **Adventure Software**
Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Nigel Brooks**

Believe it or not, this game is based on THAT famous main-frame original. To the author's credit, this game has a third more locations, a completely new 30 location introduction, and is 100% machine code with over 50% compression of the memory used up to house the text (whew!). Further, the vocabulary is developed enough to take on board the sophisticated GET ALL and DROP ALL commands, and location descriptions can be FULL or BRIEF. All the major problems have been reworked, and a great many of the old locations have improved and expanded text. Add to this a new 'end game' and you begin to wonder why the game didn't cut any remaining links and call itself by a totally new name!

It is Summer. You are a lowly farmhand on ditch-digging duty while everyone else is gathering the harvest. Suddenly you uncover a buried casket. Inside you find some keys, a map and the mildewy remains of a book. It is the journal of an uncelebrated, but clearly successful explorer.

Apart from the opening, much of this adventure is the same as *Colossal*. I've left the best of this adventure to last. What makes any adventure special is the amount of real effort put into making the gameplay more interesting, and in this adventure much thought has been brought to bear on old adventuring ways. Most interesting is the way in which the game has tackled the much-maligned

problem of object carrying. Clothes may be REMOVED or WORN, objects are weighted (eg a nugget counts as two weights), and to add a degree of realism, pockets have been added to the clothes whereby PUT KEYS sees the keys, or any other pocket-sized item, safely in your pocket. I must admit I couldn't work out how to get the keys back out of the pocket without dropping them - a most inelegant solution, but no doubt this is only a minor omission from the instructions. Other refinements include a GET ALL which doesn't work in the dark, FULL and BRIEF location descriptions, full versions creating a new location as this is a feature to get the adventurer quickly used to the terrain, and five instant RAM SAVED, which come in very useful.



Adventure is the most unoriginal name of the whole bunch, and on the face of it another version of *Colossal* is the last thing we want. Adventure Software, 21 Ditchling Rise, Brighton BN1 4BQ.

Difficulty: playable

Graphics: none at all

Presentation: very readable redesigned character set, and that's about it

Input facility: verb/noun

Response: fast

General rating: interesting

Atmosphere	88%
Vocabulary	76%
Logic	86%
Addictive quality	79%
Overall	84%

SHREWSBURY KEY

Producer: **Players**
Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Mark Gipson**

Shrewsbury Key is a reasonable graphic adventure with a novel storyline. The game has you start at York Railway Station and it's up to you to navigate your way to Shrewsbury, making use of the train 'The Shrewsbury Key' to start your journey. The reason for going to Shrewsbury is to find the fabled, diamond encrusted Golden Key which lies there.

There are two things I'd like to point out straight away about this game, in order to save a lot of frustration. In the instructions the game warns that it is verb/noun only, and you'd better believe it. At one stage when I was told to catch a lift, I tried CATCH A LIFT with no success, but CATCH LIFT did the trick. The second thing to be aware of is the exacting requirements set on input. You can get away with EXAM for EXAMINE, but words



like TICKET must be spelt out in full, although thankfully, words such as WHEELBARROW can be shortened to WHEEL.

If an awkwardness in language wasn't enough, then the plot can be pretty confusing too. At the rough wooden fence outside York station. Examining the fence gives 'The fence has a small hole which

could easily be made bigger', and on KICKing the fence, 'The fence has a hole big enough to squeeze through'. But try as you might there is no way the program is going to let you through it, even after all that encouragement.

It is in fact possible to complete the game without going this way, and if this is true then I take a very dim view of the tease which had me almost smashing my computer in frustration. Of the two bins in the story, the first bin can be SEARCHed, but the second cannot for some unknown reason. On this occasion, as in so many others, the replies are less than helpful.

The logic of gameplay is not good either, what with a storekeeper accepting a sneaker in exchange for a trowel. Or how about the Wheelbarrow which you buy for £30, which should leave a £20 cheque for the store (a curious way of receiving change from a store in the first place). But on checking your inventory the cheque is £30 - with no explanation as to why it should have suddenly increased in value. There are many examples of where the plot

isn't quite zany enough to be amusing, but it is annoyingly quirk-some enough to get you irritated.

Shrewsbury Key isn't too bad for the asking price, although the pictures are simple, they are at least colourful, and the character set has been redesigned. Slightly annoying is the program's insistence on the first key entry being used as a signal for the rest of the location description to scroll up, therefore you sometimes look up to the screen to see the first letter of your input missing. Even when you learn to avoid this the program still runs more slowly because of it. The story is a bit thin, as is gameplay.

Difficulty: easy

Graphics: cheap but colourful

Presentation: alright

Input facility: verb/noun

Response: average

General rating: cheap

Atmosphere	72%
Vocabulary	68%
Logic	65%
Addictive quality	70%
Overall	68%

I start this month's Signpost with an unusual event for me. Yes, I've actually managed to hold on to one of those really long letters so I can give you the second half. The letter in question is the one criticising Gareth (I'll leave his second name to persons who can be bothered to look up old issues - so as not to embarrass the poor chap any further) for his erroneous tips on Journey's End.

TIPSTER TRASHED

Dear Derek

If you are attacked by rats, and one of your party has a +2 or a more magic sword, put only him in the front line. He will get 3 stabs at the rats before they even get a chance to attack, and as one stab is usually sufficient to see off a rat, he will never even get a scratch (this is a bit slow but very effective). Also, don't use a shield spell for rats as they don't use anything that you would want to be shielded from. Don't stay on hunting mode or it will take you 3 times as long to get to the castle, you will be attacked 3 times as often, and be dead 3 times as quick! About the only thing on which I agree with Gareth is the advice 'Don't use the teleports in the castle'. It is a bad idea to write in with hints if you haven't finished an adventure, as many have a twist in the tail. I am guilty of this myself, having got halfway through The PRICE OF MAGIC and excitedly sent in tips to various magazines, that on completion of the adventure turned out to be only 60% right. Fortunately, they were never published, so I don't have to walk the streets with a bag over my head!

Carl Young, Nottingham

Right, anyone seen walking down the street with a bag over his bonce is probably a Gareth, if the conclusion of this letter is to be taken literally. More importantly, I forgot to give the name of last month's £20 software prize and... wait for it... guess what, it went to you Carl for putting this Gareth chappie in his place. Any more tips from Gareth will be vetted and then no doubt, thrown in the bin along with all the unimaginative Quilled games I receive every month.

DB

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Dear Derek, I have recently acquired OUT OF THE SHADOWS and enjoyed it thoroughly. However, my brother could not get anywhere and kept getting himself killed by rats and wolves - never mind dragons and belrogs! So I decided to write a program to make it easier. Just type in the after-mentioned program and you will be able to choose your Hit Points, Strength, Dexterity,

and any other objects you want with you, except Quest items (that would make it too easy)! You can also rename your character. But beware! It is very easy to go and make your Hit Points 20,000 and Dexterity 30,000 but this seems to have a rebounding effect, because when I did this I found that I could not hit anything! I usually stick to around 500 for each and have been able to inflict up to 250 damage points with a sword.

```
10 POKE 23658,8 : RESTORE
20 : FOR r= 50000 TO 50026
:READ b :POKE r,b : NEXT r
20 DATA 55,62,255,221,33,
48,11,7,17,187,4,205,86,
5,201
```

```
25 DATA 62,255,221,33,48,
117,17,187,4,205,194,4,
201
```

```
30 PRINT "INSERT SAVED
OUT OF THE SHADOWS GAME
AND PRESS PLAY"
```

```
40 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
50 DIM NS(16) : INPUT "WHAT
DO YOU WANT TO CALL YOUR
CHARACTER?"; LINE NS
60 FOR R=1 TO 16 :POKE
31013+R,CODE NS(R) : NEXT
R
```

```
70 RESTORE 9000 :FOR L+1
TO 44 :READ AD,OS :PRINT AT
10,0;"HOW MANY"; OS;"S",
:AT 11,0 "DO YOU WANT?
(MAX 65535)"
```

```
80 INPUT LINE AS :IF AS + ""
OR LEN AS > 5 THEN GOTO 80
90 FOR R + 1 TO LEN AS :IF
AS(R) < "0" OR AS(R) > "9"
THEN GOTO 80
```

```
100 NEXT R :LET A + VAL AS
:LET N2 + INT (A/256) :LET N1
+A - N2 * 256 :POKE AD, N1 :
POKE AD + 1, N2 :NEXT L
```

```
110 BEEP 1,0 :PRINT "START
TAPE AND PRESS ANY KEY"
120 IF INKEY$ <> "" THEN
GOTO 120
```

```
130 IF INKEY$ + "" THEN
GOTO 130
```

```
140 RANDOMIZE USR 50014
150 INPUT "ANOTHER GO?
(Y/N)"; LINE AS :IF AS + "N"
THEN RANDOMIZE USR 0
```

```
160 GOTO 50
9000 DATA 31051,"HIT
POINT",31079,"STRENGTH
POINT",31081,"DEXTERITY
POINT"
```

```
9010 DATA 31091,"DAG-
GER",31093,"CLUB",
31095,"MACE",31097,
```

```
"AXE",31099,"SWORD"
```

```
9020 DATA 31101,"LAN-
TERN",31103,"TINDER-
BOX",31105,"KEY",31107,
"OIL",31109,"FOOD PACK",
31111,"TORCH",31113,
"MARKER"
```

```
9030 DATA 31115,"OINT-
MENT",31117,"POTION",
31119,"AMULET",31121,
"HORN",31123,"RING"
9040 DATA 31131,"STAFF",
31133,"ROD",31135,
"WAND"
```

```
9050 DATA 31141,"TELE-
PORT SPELL",31143,
"SLEEP SPELL",31145,
"WISH SPELL",31147,
"SLOW SPELL",31149,
"PASS-WALL SPELL",31151,
"BLAST SPELL"
```

```
9060 DATA 31157,"HEL-
MET",31159,"BREAST-
PLATE",31161,"L.VAM-
BRACE",31163,"R.VAM-
BRACE",31165,
"L.GREAVE",31167,
"R.GREAVE",31169,
"SHIELD"
```

```
9070 DATA 31171,COPPER
COIN",31173,"SILVER
COIN",31175,"GOLD COIN"
9080 DATA 31177,"AMETH-
YST",31179,"EMERALD",
31181,"OPAL",31183,
"RUBIE",31185,
"DIAMOND"
```

MASTER OF MAGIC

Dear Derek,

I shall start at the best possible place for my solution to Master of Magic, the beginning, and take you through the adventure step by step.

First, lure the skeleton into the passageway at the beginning, then destroy it with magic (a missile is best), then take the dagger. Now, to collect the mace you must go East, North, South, East, North. There destroy orc and pick up the mace (NB whatever weapon you want to attack with must be in your right hand).

Next, get the healing potion. Now, from where you got the mace go South, West, South, East, Down (through the door) then follow the passageway. Kill the snake and the potion is in the corner. (If you can't pick it up discard the dagger, you don't need it). Go back to the door. The next item to collect is the backpack. From the door go East, South, West, North, kill the bat, go upstairs, through one door, then through another, go West, destroy the skeleton if it appears. You then come to three passageways. Go along the bottom one, down the steps and into the room, kill the spider and

wear the backpack.

The next items are the shield, helmet, and wooden dagger. Go back to the three passageways and then go through the middle one up the steps. This leads to a large area which is populated by an orc (carrying a wooden dagger), three skeletons (one with a helmet, another with the shield) and four hellhounds. Destroy the orc and skeletons but leave the hellhounds, they're not worth the trouble.

Now you should have a mace in your right hand and a shield in your left. You are wearing a helmet and backpack and in the backpack are a scroll, a potion and a dagger. The next paraphernalia to collect are the sword and some potion. Go South-East from the steps to the pool, then go East to the other steps, go Down, then West. You are then confronted with 2 doors opposite each other. Go through the North door first, then West, then North, kill the spider, follow the passageway North until you come across an orc. Destroy him but leave the dagger, carry on East, South, East, East, North, through the door, then destroy the orc and pick up the axe and the potion labelled Alumrof Ecnegillenti Artxe, discard the mace and put the potion in your backpack.

Return to the main passageway with 2 doors, then go through the South door, carry on South until you've reached the bottom, go West then North, then destroy the skeleton. Now pick up the sword and potion of healing (N.B. use the potions whenever your strength is really low, otherwise try to conserve

them). Watch out for the fireball throwing wizard.

The penultimate objects to collect are the dagger of death and the armour (go back to the beginning, then from there proceed North, kill the bat, West, you then come to passageway of three steps, go along the bottom one. If a spider appears kill it, swap your sword for a wooden dagger, follow the passageway - the vampire should be in the bottom room. Destroy the vampire, pick up the dagger of death and put that and the wooden dagger in your backpack. Take out your sword, then go East then South, go through the lower passageway, then go South, destroy the orc, then wear the armour.

Chris Hunt, Gwent

MINDSTONE

Dear Derek, Here is a complete solution to The Edge's MINDSTONE, reviewed by you in CRASH No 33 last month.

There are a few minor subplots which I have not bothered to detail as they only involve trading, fighting, bartering etc, in ways that are not essential to the main storyline. This is a complete solution, so anyone who does not want the entire game given away should take care not to read the final paragraphs.

Starting off in the bar at Elantor, have Merel DRINK. This will increase his strength points by twenty (handy for later bloody encounters). This bar is badly stocked, there is only one glass of one drink available, so leave and visit the village store (on the way PICK UP the spade which you'll find lying in the street). In the store BUY a Thief's Toolkit. There is lots more stuff on offer but you don't really need it, and it's important to conserve your gold pieces.

You can visit the village mystic if you like, but don't bother buying his Zap spell - it's expensive

and unnecessary.

Now go S, then E, then S again and TAKE the OPEN spell which you will find there. Travel N and E. Have Taina CAST the OPEN spell to remove the boulder which blocks your way. (It's best to put Taina in charge of spell casting as she has the highest Psyche). Go E, into the Snake's Cave. PICK UP the Psyche Ring, which can be used once only to replenish a character's waning Psyche. To use the ring MEDITATE.

Don't waste time killing the snake, it just takes vital strength points. DROP the OPEN spell; you won't need it again.

Go W, S, E, into the Foothills where you will find a Drum. Leave it where it is, it's just excess baggage with no useful purpose whatsoever.

Now go E to the Crossroads then N. A pixie will offer you a Royal Orb for 38 gold pieces. Give him 33 and he'll part with it. Go E and N to the Marsh and have Merel ATTACK the leopard that's waiting there. (This will cost him 30 strength points, but what's that to a hulk like Merel?). Now go N then W and take the LIGHT spell. Go E, ignoring the voyager who will sell you a totally useless Holy Arrow if you let him.

Carry on W, then S to the Plain, then S, E, N into a Forest Glade. Here you can TRADE your Orb with an Elf. In exchange he will give you a Tiger Amulet. Return to the Crossroads.

Go S and have big Merel ATTACK the crocodile at a cost of 35 strength points. Merel will be down to 6 strength points by now, so don't let him get into any more scraps until you've replenished his strength later on. Otherwise it'll be curtains for the big fella.

Go W and PICK UP the lump of lead. Go S, to Riverside and TAKE the FIREBALL spell.

Return to the Forest Glade where you traded with the Elf, and keep going E until you reach the entrance to The Icelands. Here CAST the FIREBALL spell and melt the wall of ice that's

hindering your progress. DROP the FIREBALL spell.

Go E, then N, and enter the Ice Hall. PICK UP the Clock. Continue E, N, E, and have either Prince Kyle or Quin ATTACK the wolf (cost is 10 str.). PICK UP the Magic Ring which the wolf will drop. There's a hungry polar bear in the near vicinity, but if you meet him don't grapple. He's just there to steal your strength.

Now about heel and return to Riverside. Go W, into the Cavehouse. The caver will offer to show you a tunnel, for a price, but don't take him up on it yet. Instead, travel W, to the Orc's Kingdom. Have Quin ATTACK the Orc Guard (-34 str).

S, W and N will bring you to the Orc's Village. W, then S, and PICK UP a second Psyche Ring. Now N, and N again, to the Orc Castle. Here there's an ALCHEMY spell to be taken. Let whoever is carrying the lead take the spell, then CAST it for instant replenishment of your gold supply. Keep the ALCHEMY spell as it can be used again later.

Go back to The Cavehouse. It's a good idea to SAVE the game at this point. I'll explain why in a minute.

The caver wants 59g to show you the tunnel, but he'll take 55. You are now in Kranos. Whatever you do, don't go N or you'll be back in the Cavehouse where a grinning caver will demand another 59g for the privilege of taking you back to Kranos again. At this stage, if you've not been taking care with your gold you may find that you don't have 59 pieces left, in which case it's GAME OVER for all who didn't SAVE when they should have.

In Kranos go W to the Shadowlord's Fort. TAKE the DESTROY spell. Now go E, and E again to find yourself in the bar at Kranos. Remarkable place this. Everyone can drink and keep drinking until their individual strength points have been replenished to a maximum of 200 (enough to get you through the rest of the quest). Even better, nobody falls down sloshed.

Leave the bar, going W, S, W, to the Sorcerer's Castle. He will trade you your Tiger Amulet for a Talisman. Now go E and use the Thief's Toolkit to open the locked door to the south. PICK UP the Bible and go E, and further E onto a road.

Go E and E again to the Gold Mountains. There's some food lying around here which may be useful for extra strength, should you decide to do some extra-curricular fighting further along the way.

Go N and ATTACK the warrior (-27 str), then N again into the Dwarves' Mine. DIG with the spade and your gold will be replenished. DROP the spade. S and W will lead you to a RESTORE spell, useful if anyone dies (which won't happen if you have closely followed these instructions). Go S, W, S, to the Doomgate which is locked. USE the Talisman to unlock it and go S, into Nemesar's Kingdom. Here you can ATTACK a Giant Sandworm if you wish (though

it's not necessary) at a cost of 70 strength points, the worm will then drop a Book of Spells. Go S then E to Mindhenge and USE the Bible to destroy the chanting Devil Worshipper. Go E, E, E, and meet a fisherman who will sell you something. If you're loaded and want a little laugh (at your expense), take him up on it.

N takes you to the entrance to the Ancient City. A goblin will charge you 41g to get in, but if you're clever you can get away with 36. Go E, and S to an Ancient Temple; E and ATTACK the Minotaur (-26 str). E once more will bring you to the Fountain of Youth where one person may DRINK and gain 20 extra strength points. Now go back to the entrance to the city and go N, then E where a Wood Elf will trade a Torch for your Clock. Now go W, and N to a tunnel where you'll need to USE the torch. N, E, and N again will take you to a Riverside (not the same one as earlier). There's some lead here, so if you are low on gold, CAST the ALCHEMY spell. Now DROP the spell as you no longer need it. Go N and N again. Ignore the mind vampire and he, in return, will ignore you, letting you pass E unhindered. In the field ATTACK the ghoul (-20 str). Go E to the Dwarf Kingdom, then E, and E once more, giving a cold shoulder to the blue Dwarf who wants to trade with you. S and W takes you to a Dwarf's Cabin where a Strength Potion may be bought from an old Dwarf if any of your party is feeling weak (provided, that is, your purse is still bulging).

N, W and S brings you onto the Carokot road and the end of the quest is now in sight.

Go S, then E to the bar in Carokot where a Deserter will sell you a Back Door Pass. You don't really need this as long as your strength is high, and it should be.

Go E, then E again, and TRADE your Book of Spells (if you have one) with a wizard who will pay you handsomely. Now go W, S, S, E, through the desert where another Psyche Ring may be found, and E once more to the Front Door of Nemesar's Palace (if you bought the Pass you can go S and E again to the Back Door). ATTACK the Shadowlord barring the entrance (-50 str). Go E into the palace and a dim, cold room. Go W and ATTACK the Fire Dragon (-74 str), then N, and do the same to the Mantagore in his passage (-63 str). N once more takes you to Mephistopheles (-70 str). Go N again and you are face to face with Nemesar and the Mindstone. If you've followed these instructions, and not gone off attacking every other baddie and beastie littering the landscape, you will have ample strength points left to finish off Nemesar, thus taking the Mindstone and freeing the world from the clutches of an evil, violent and wart-covered tyrant.

Phil Williamson, London NW1

Well done, Phil, for these tips you receive this month's £20 software prize.

DB

SIGNSTUMPS

There's a lot of queries to answer this month, so without any further ado lets get onto the first question.

After 3 years, it appears that THE HOBBIT is still going strong. M. S. Whiting From New Zealand asks:

1. How do you get the Bard to defeat the Dragon?
2. How do you enter the boat and then cross the black river?
3. Where is the key to the cache and how do you enter the cache?
4. Can you go to Gollum's Island?
5. Where is Beorn?
6. How do you enter and escape the web?
7. What do you say to Gollum when he asks 'What has it got in its pockets?'?
8. What is the gold key for?"

Don't blame me if any of these answers are wrong, I haven't played the game for over a year.

1. SAY TO BARD "SHOOT DRAGON"
2. THROW ROPE ONTO BOAT then PULL ROPE CAREFULLY
3. Nothing can be done with the goblin's cache
4. I don't think you can go to the island
5. I haven't seen Beorn when I've played the game
6. CUT WEB WITH SWORD
7. It's best simply to kill Gollum
8. Just points I think!

Mick Brophy of Stockport is playing CONQUEST and asks:

"Could you please tell me what the following do: balls, stars, talismans, amulets, the Egyptian looking sphinx thingy! and clocks and coffins?"

The balls should be placed on the correct colour pedestals to open the portcullis. The stars are used at the end of the game to protect from evil, read the Book of Legend for more detail. There are two different amulets and two different talismans. One protects from snake bites, one stops the gremlins stealing treasures, one halves the damage done by nasties whilst the other doubles it. The Idol denotes areas of evil. The clocks and coffins are purely decoration.

Scott Maddy of Lainden, Essex writes:

"In HAMSTEAD I have Pippa, given documents to Chubby, have a car and deeds to a cottage. Where is the cottage? Can you help me finish the game?"

When Chubby asks you what you want to do say NBSSZ QJQQB. After giving him the

reports go back to the Oxfam shop and change back into the tracksuit. Remove the tie, get the bike and ride with Pippa across Hampstead Heath into Hampstead.

S. Field from London is finding difficulty with PRICE OF MAGIK and asks:

"What is XAM used for? Is there any way to get the wheel in the misty room? What use is the Valerian plant? How do you get the sword out of the ceiling?"

XAM needs the QSJTN as a focus, it gives information about the magic properties of the target. The WBNQJSF CBU will help you with the wheel. The Valerian plant is used with the GJY TQFMM.

Ted Webb of Waterloooville, Hants, is having problems with CRL's VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE and asks:

How do I climb the triffid without being eaten? Also, how do I avoid Jeff Minter on the bridge and how do I get past the Contribution plate gate?"

To kill the Triffid EJB M QBSBRVBU on the utility belt. To pass the hairy figure HJWF RFDPSSE from the giant room. To open the gate ESPQ QJFDF of plate.

Rauli Srinivasan of Epsom, Surrey writes:

"You've got to help me! After ages of fruitless toil, I can't get onto the ferry in LORD OF THE RINGS. In desperation I bought the BOGIT and played that brilliant spoof instead, only to find I couldn't find the sword!"

You find the sword in the DBVMESPO, simply DMJNC DBVMESPO. To get Frodo et al onto the ferry, you must first bring it to the correct side of the river by turning the handle 5 times. You can then board the ferry by HFU BCPBSE GFSSZ.

John Chaney from Henley, Oxon asks:

"Please could you help me in COLDITZ. I can't get the coffin open and I also can't find the other person to give the food to."

You need the DSPXCBS to open the coffin, with it MFWS MJE. The person you

give the food to is in the jail, but first you must rescue him.

Chris Jones of Formby asks the following questions about EUREKA:

"ROMAN TIMES - How do you get St Peter to cure your leprosy?

ARTHURIAN BRITAIN - How do you kill the rabbit? (Do you use the silver-tipped spear?)

WAR-TIME GERMANY - How do you use the sewing kit and blankets to make a uniform? How do you get through the minefield?"

To get St Peter to cure your leprosy give him the SPCF. To pass the rabbit ESPQ DBSSPU. To make a uniform you also need QPMJTI, and finally to get through the minefield VTF CBZPOFU.

Tim Shelton of Stockport is having difficulty with several adventures and writes:

"I am a keen, although not particularly good, adventure gamer. There are four games that I have been able to make no headway with for quite some time. Please could you help me in my quests?

1. KENTILLA - How do you turn the gold key to iron?
2. SEAS OF BLOOD - After leaving my ship I cannot manage to get to land, but just stay stranded at sea.
3. TOWER OF DESPAIR - Of the three doors, I cannot get the crystal from the door labelled HOPE.
4. VELNOR'S LAIR - How do you cross the waterfall, and what do you feed the sharks with?"

To turn the key to iron EJQ LFZ JOUP MJRVJE. Make sure you have removed your gold ring first! To disembark onto dry land you must take your ship adjacent to land then HP BTIPSF. To be able to safely get the sphere you must first XFBS HBVOUMFU. Finally in Velnor you can feed the sharks with EFBE PHSFT. That's it for another month, hope I've been of help. If you've got any questions to ask, or help to give, then please write to: SIGNSTUMPS 1/2 KING ST LUDLOW SHROPSHIRE SY8 1AQ

SUPERHERO

I claim the Superhero title for solving AFTER-SHOCK by Interceptor on Monday 7th of October at 1.05 pm. To finish the game I replaced the missing valve on the pipe and pressed the button in the reactor room. The final screen message tells you that the backup system bursts into life, the core temperature is falling rapidly and the city will rise again from the ashes like a phoenix. Starting tips are to examine the lift to see a panel and then climb onto a chair and remove it, then climb out of the lift. To pass the cables switch off the Isolator in the utility room. James Elliott, Alloa.

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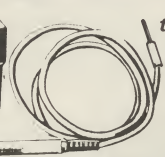
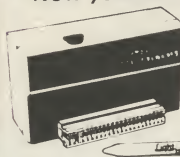
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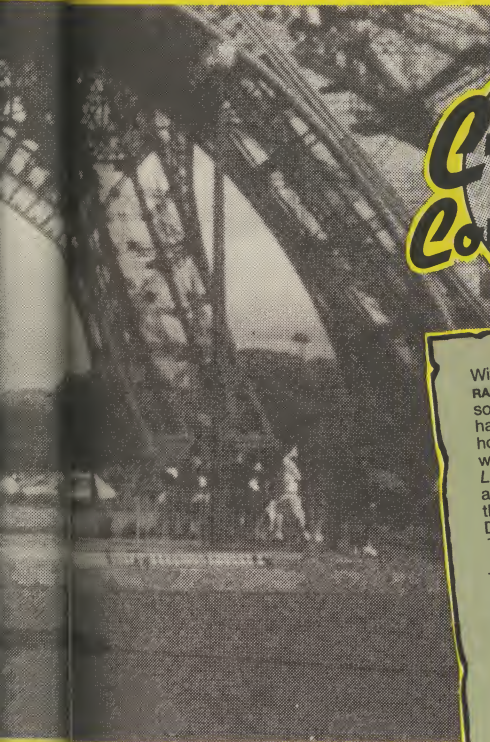
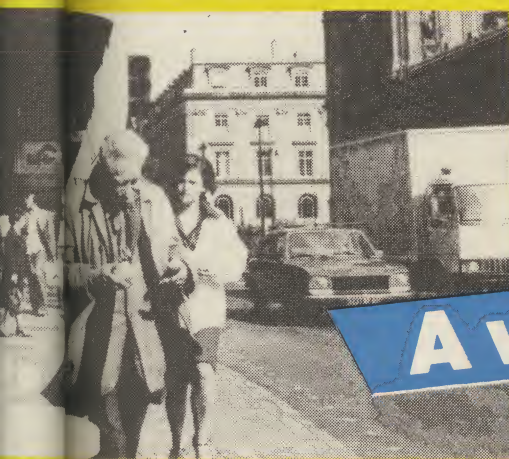
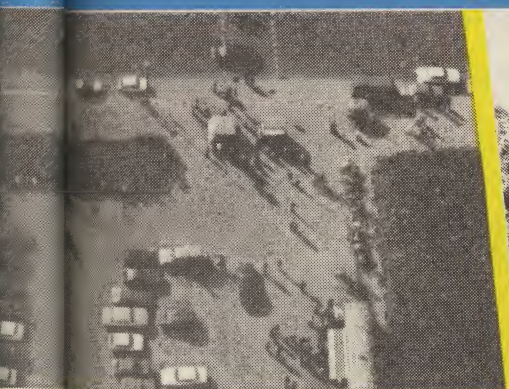
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SPRINGTIME



**A weekend break for two
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**Crash
Competition**

Within a few short months, INFOGRAMES have made their mark on the software scene — their talents have been well-known in their home country France for some while, but now games such as *L'Affaire Vera Cruz*, *Mandragore* and *The Inheritance* are available this side of the White Cliffs of Dover. Soon, they will be joined by *The Sydney Affair*.

Seeing as it's **THAT TIME OF THE YEAR** again, (Christmas, in case you hadn't noticed) INFOGRAMES would like to treat a lucky CRASH reader and a companion to a bit of sightseeing in La Belle France. They are going to pay for the winner's return flight from either Gatwick or Heathrow to the Charles De Gaulle airport in Paris and will cover the cost of three nights' bed and breakfast in a Three Star Paris hotel. What a pleasant springtime break!

All the winner will have to fund is spending money, lunch and dinner — and of course travel from home — so how to you get in with a chance of a Spring weekend in Europe's most romantic city? Well, a bit of research is called for. No, you don't have to translate a

great wedge of French inlay instructions for the nice Mr Cross-weller who runs things in this country for INFOGRAMES, nor are you going to have to wash his car for a year with your tongue.

Scamper down to the library or a travel agency and dig out some books or brochures about Paris. Pore over them, imagining the lovely time you would have if you won this competition. Then jot down an imaginary diary, describing the sights you saw, the places you visited and the things you did during an imaginary weekend in Paris.

Add a few illustrations drawn by your own fair hand or snipped out of a travel brochure if you like, but don't fill more than two A4 pages.

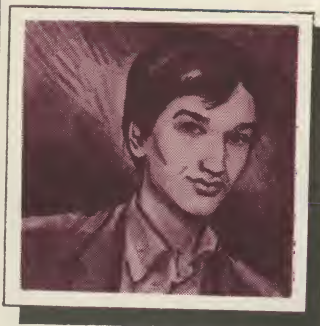
When it's all ticketty boo and complete, send your diary to LA BELLE FRANCE, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB making sure it arrives before 20th January.

Everyone who enters will collect a special £3.00 off voucher redeemable against any INFOGRAMES game purchased mail-order direct from their UK office. Can't be bad, eh?

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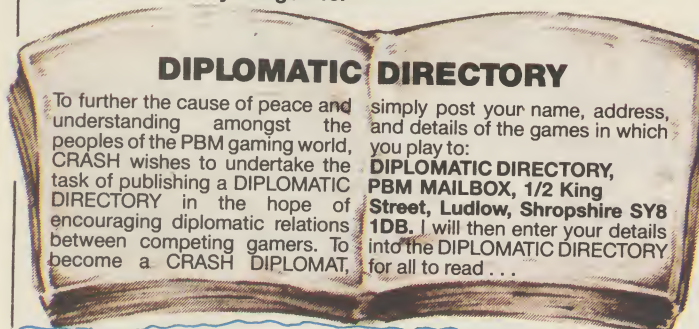
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Despite the Xmas postal chaos, Brendon Kavanagh brings news of some new releases and an overview of Saturnalia - a game of quest, exploration and fantasy

Christmas is once more upon us, and now the dear old Post Office has upped its postal charges, it is time for the sorting office to hibernate for the winter. This is a cruel time of year for those trying to meet PBM deadlines, let alone keep on top in open ended games, for it takes noticeably longer for

those crucial communications to get from A to B and back to A again. Fortunately, GMs are aware of the Chrimble postal delays and deadlines are deferred, allowing addicted PBMs to relax while trying to figure out where to replant this year's Christmas tree...



DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY

To further the cause of peace and understanding amongst the peoples of the PBM gaming world, CRASH wishes to undertake the task of publishing a DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY in the hope of encouraging diplomatic relations between competing gamers. To become a CRASH DIPLOMAT,

simply post your name, address, and details of the games in which you play to:
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YULETIDE COMPETITION

Okay, all you budding PBM game designers, let us test your imagination by setting you a simple competition. All you have to do is design a two player PBM game that could be run on a standard 48K Spectrum with a printer. We don't want you to actually write the software, or even go as far as flowcharting a program. All we would like you to do, is to write no more than 1,000 words describing:

- ▶ The Game Scenario
- ▶ How the printouts would be laid out (ie. how much information would be given per turn)
- ▶ What the player would do each turn
- ▶ For how long the game would run
- ▶ How much memory you think that the game would use
- ▶ How the game would 'play'
- ▶ What the game packaging would include

Prizes will be given for the most original ideas submitted to us by the closing date for entries — 20th January 1987. First prize is a trio of subscriptions: to FLAGSHIP, PBM MAGAZINE and CRASH. We'll throw in two free tickets to the Second British PBM convention at the Porchester Hall, London, on

the 7th February 1987. Eighteen runners-up are set to collect a pair of tickets to the PBM Convention...

Get those game ideas in to **PBM COMPETITION, CRASH Towers, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB**



SATURNALIA — A GAME OVERVIEW

Saturnalia is a low priced, open ended fantasy role playing PBM game run by SLOTH ENTERPRISES of Southampton. The game is set upon the mysterious landmass of Saturnalia which, with its varying climates and wonderous creatures, is something like a cross between Europe, Middle Earth, and CRASH Towers.

Saturnalia has no really original features — in fact, as fantasy games go, it has little special about it at all. Having said that, Saturnalia fans certainly enjoy their escapades in this game.

The (very good) rulebook is split into simple sections covering religion, economics, magic, combat, scouting and movement.

Religion and Magic are two very important parts of this game. Your character is recommended to follow one of the land's fourteen not-so-mythical Gods and Goddesses. Following each God has its pros and cons: believing in the Weather God, Somol, may give you fine travelling conditions, but this doesn't help you very much against Destu, God of Darkness! Your choice of religion influences your character's ability to learn various types of spells, so a careful choice of religion proves to be very important if you intend to use a lot of magic in your game, since your character may learn only a limited number of these spells.

Economics only enters Saturnalia in the crude form of Supply and Demand influencing artefact values. Money exists in various tenders, and is (of course) very valuable — some finance is required to buy tools, food and weaponry for yourself.

When you join Saturnalia you are asked to design your character. The first stage of this process is to

distribute 250 **Ability Points** among your character's five abilities (combat, magical, vitality, scouting and perception). The higher the weighting, the greater the ability — simple! The second stage is to describe your character's appearance, habits, trade, family background and so on. As the game progresses, all of these variables change. Ability points rise and fall with use/abuse, and your character's description changes, should he (for example) turn away from being a merchant to being a thief. A sixth numerical rating exists for your character — **Fame**. This fluctuates as you do good or bad deeds of varying degrees, and this is a true reflection of your character's honour and compassion!

As in most games, Saturnalia features a hexed landscape (with about ten terrain types), an efficient movement system, and a GM-controlled combat method (for which the GM uses such variables as relative abilities, magic, terrain suitabilities, and so on).

Saturnalia is a simple but enjoyable game to play. SLOTH ENTERPRISES have run this multi-player game successfully for nearly two years now without any major problems that immediately spring to mind. Start up costs £5.00; this fee also includes the rules and your first five turns. Each turn costs £1.25 thereafter and there are no hidden charges. If you enjoy role playing games, you may well enjoy Saturnalia.

Drop them a line, enclosing your cheque or Postal Order — **Saturnalia CRASH Startup, SLOTH ENTERPRISES, FREEPOST, P O Box 82, Southampton, Hants, SO9 7FG**

NEWS AND VIEWS

FLAGSHIP

At long last, FLAGSHIP 12 is both out AND available (not as daft as it sounds after its printers failed to produce the agreed number of copies — no mince pies for them.) Articles of interest to British readers are features on *Vorcon Wars*, *Capitol*, *Chester-based SF game Rebirth*, and the rapidly expanding *Conquest* game. Issue 12 also includes the regular news pieces and tips pages, as well as a very interesting letters page. **Nicky Palmer** (FLAGSHIP editor) has even been kind enough to give CRASH a mention in his editorial. A four issue FLAGSHIP subscription costs £6.00 from **FLAGSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS, P O BOX 12, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 0TJ.**

NEW GAMES

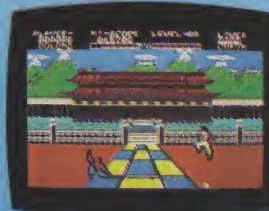
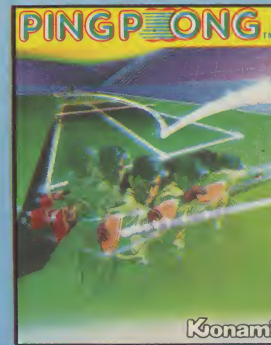
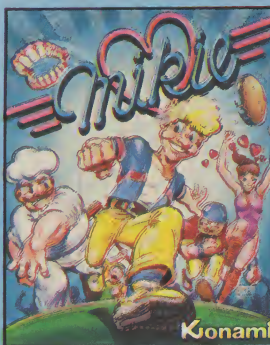
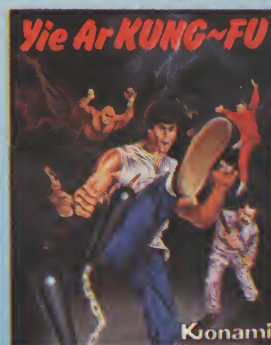
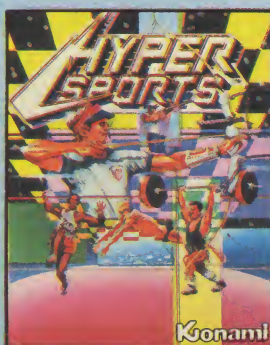
This Autumn, a fair number of new games have been launched, including the three-player game *Muskets and Mules* (A strategic wargame set in central Europe circa 1800), *St. Valentines Day Massacre* by **RAMPAGE GAMES** (a more detailed and interesting version of Chicago gangland goings on than *It's a Crime!* although just as controversial and more expensive), and *Monsters and Magic* by **SPOTLIGHT GAMES**. I shall examine some of these new games more closely in the New Year.

Any which way up, have a Merry Yuletide — I hope you now have a use for the ever present biros and letter writing sets among your Christmas goodies!

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CBM 64/128 [Ⓣ] [Ⓢ]
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SPECTRUM 48K £7.99 [Ⓣ]



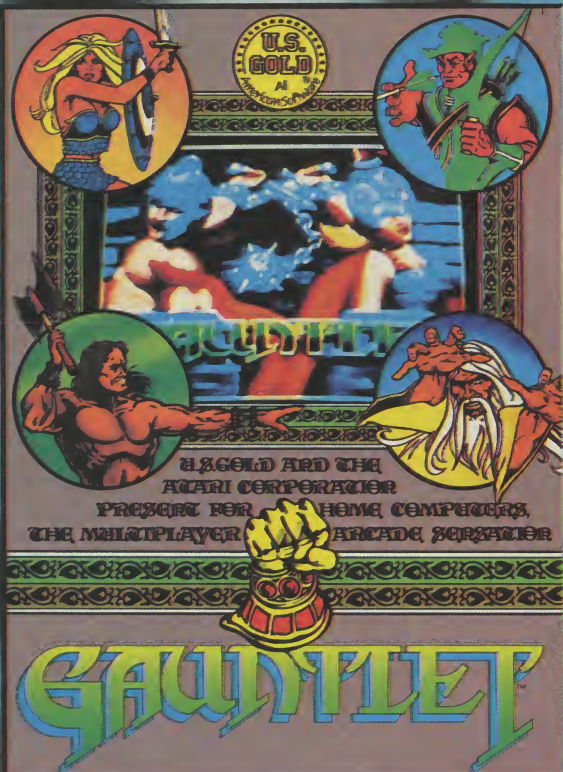
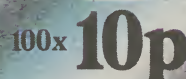
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PK430 your country's
revolutionary fighter...
location – 400 miles behind
enemy lines... possible
enemy armaments – flame
throwers, helicopters, tanks,
jeeps, landmines... your
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most sophisticated armed
vehicle... mission status –
vital... mission consequences
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Win yourself a **FLIPBOT**, courtesy of **DOMARK**

**Crash
Competition**

GENESIS, BIRTH OF A COMPETITION



KAT-TRAP WORD SQUARE

P	S	E	R	A	L	F	S	R	E	A	W	S	Y	R	A	G
N	O	O	E	S	E	R	T	O	S	L	V	T	S	Q	N	O
T	R	Z	R	T	N	T	V	N	L	R	N	C	R	R	T	O
P	O	O	G	R	A	E	M	E	F	A	R	T	Y	O	Y	L
R	I	C	F	E	P	K	M	A	H	A	R	G	P	E	P	I
B	D	A	V	E	Z	R	L	S	F	G	D	P	R	R	O	A
V	R	R	S	T	R	A	C	H	A	N	R	F	R	A	P	G
M	E	L	T	W	R	M	S	T	M	N	O	L	T	N	M	P
A	H	O	L	I	D	E	S	I	G	N	F	I	N	K	Q	A
N	C	S	R	S	N	G	I	S	E	D	F	P	C	E	T	R
G	U	D	P	E	T	O	N	O	F	L	A	B	B	Y	S	S
R	O	J	O	H	N	E	G	G	E	L	T	O	N	O	N	R
I	R	N	C	M	N	T	I	R	V	N	S	T	P	G	O	E
M	C	F	H	S	A	R	C	T	S	T	V	O	T	A	R	T
L	A	G	G	S	R	R	R	E	M	O	T	T	O	B	A	T
O	I	A	N	D	D	I	K	E	M	E	A	R	G	I	R	E
B	O	Z	I	E	O	N	I	C	H	S	N	E	D	S	O	L

NAME

ADDRESS

..... POST CODE

**The hard work has all but ended:
Let the fun begin!**

After months and months of work, *Kat-Trap* is almost complete. Remember all those Issues ago when we reported on the meeting in Birmingham when **DAVE CARLOS**, **GRAEME KIDD** from **CRASH**, **MARK STRACHAN** and **DOMINIC WHEATLEY** from **DOMARK** and **GRAHAM STAFFORD** from **DESIGN DESIGN** all met together in a hotel room to decide who had won the **Genesis competition**.

OLIVER FREY got together with the chap who sent in the winning game design, **JON EGGELTON**, and between them they developed the design for the game inlay and the artwork.

Programming work started up in Manchester, and any day now the finished game should be in the shops, appearing on the **STREETWISE** label.

Starring M.T.-Ed, an all-purpose terrain exploration droid, the game sees you battling through a host of unpleasant locations, fighting off the Kat Men who have taken over the planet Earth.

There's no doubt about it, the Kat Men are well untidy. Empty tins of giant Kit-E-Kat no doubt litter the landscape, and all sorts of bits of fur and stuff lie around the place. Rather like the **CRASH** Office after the Girlie Tipster has had ten minutes to untidy-up after the weekly hoovering session. When it comes to lobbing scraps of paper into the bin, Lee Paddon

thinks he's a real neat shot, but he misses all the time and the area around the bin is covered in screwed up scraps of "Large Electrical Doobies Monthly" which he insists on reading for sentimental reasons.

That Ben Stone is a messy fellow too. He keeps ripping labels off peoples clothes and scattering them over the floor, saying "That's not designer ... Nor's That. Or that".

And guess who has to clear up after all this mess? Right in one. Yours truly. What I could do with is a little Robot that could follow the **CRASH** office messy slob around, tidying up after them. Rather like the **FLIPBOTS** that **DOMARK** are giving away as the 10 super prizes in this competition.

What I'd like you to do is come up with a list of 5 possible names for the Katmen warriors who give old M.T.-Ed such a tough time in the game. Once you've done that, search through the wordsquare to find all the words that appear in this little narrative in **BIG LETTERS** — like those two. Ring round all you can find, and add your Katmen names to the coupon.

Whizz your entry to me at **KAT KOMP**, **CRASH Towers**, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB so it arrives here no later than 20th of January. The best 10 entries will win a **FLIPBOT**.

MY SUGGESTIONS FOR NAMES FOR THE KAT MEN ARE

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)



THE OFFICIAL 1986 INDEX

Once again, the mammoth task of indexing the software we reviewed over the past twelve months has been achieved. This year, thanks must go to **ROGER HUME** and **IAN DOGGETT** who did much of the groundwork. Don't forget . . . some games don't actually get percentage ratings!

THE SOFTWARE INDEX

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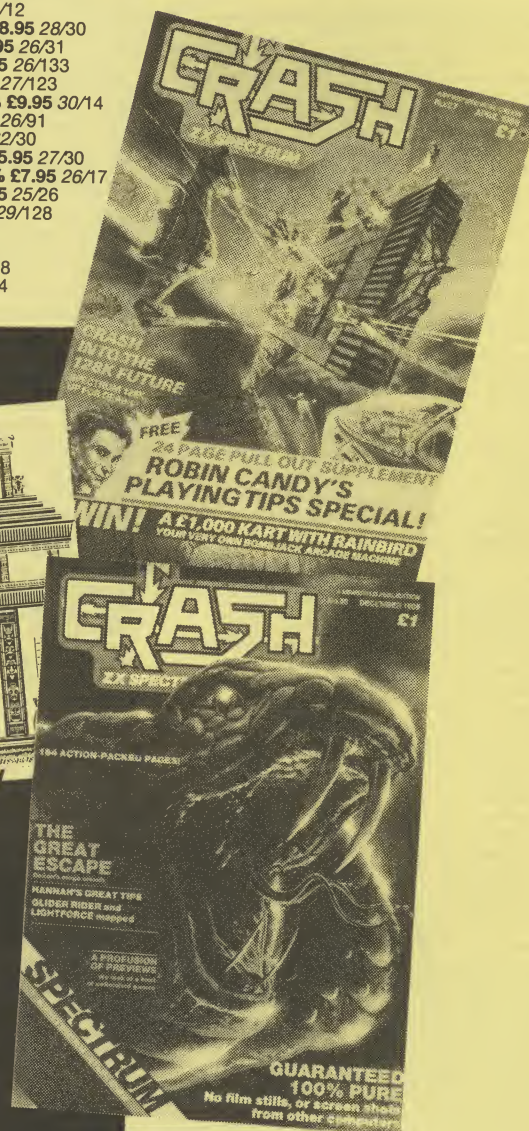
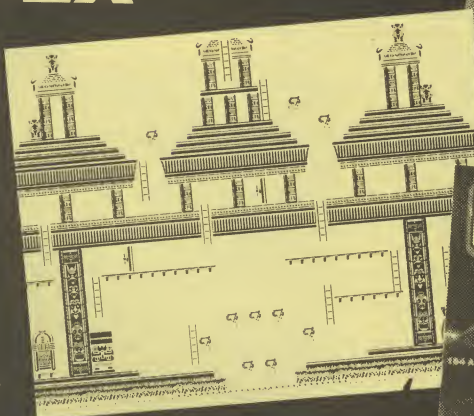
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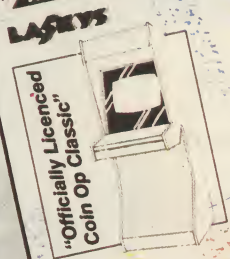


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2	
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Tamara Knight

Tamara Knight, Macdonalds teleporter salesbeing, is stranded on the planet Amnesia. The sanctuary world, where rebel computers debug off to escape the crassness of humankind, and try to forget. Unfortunately for me, a personal neutron bomb inside her ear, our ship has hit the fan.

Tamara clings on to one of the revolving blades, the rebel computer clinging to her. It's a BBC-P. It feels sick, and it wants to have a dump. We revolve majestically for a few days, waiting for the Beeb to stop moaning 'Oh one, oh one, oh one, oh...' in binary nausea, and get us out of this mess. No good. We will have to rescue ourselves. Unfortunately, I feel a bit queasy too.

At last, Tamara comes up with the answer. 'Louise?' I cannot respond, except by transforming myself into a modest tongue inside her ear, and nodding. 'Louise, why don't I pull that lever marked 'STOP'?' Brilliant! This girl has hidden shallows. Why didn't I think of that? On her very next revolution she pulls the lever. The

fan unspins. However, the Weird Castle now spins around the fan. Whoops!

This is a tughle. Now we can escape there is nothing stable to escape to. The Beeb shouts 'Olivetti!' asks for its money back and scuttles through a fan blade into the whirling depths of the interior. I have a nasty feeling that it will

'There is a gnashing of teeth, and it's raining Datsun cogs. The rotary action ceases. All is silent. Bar several thousand super-computers screaming blue murder . . .'

soon return with its pals, mainly because I've already read the next bit. I tickle my Hostess's ear for a while, just to show willing. It doesn't help. Much.

There is a gnashing of teeth, and it's raining Datsun cogs. The rotary action ceases. All is silent. Bar several thousand super-computers screaming blue murder at the intrusion of a human into their holiest bit. So this is where they all got to! The Far Off Place wherefrom to escape the stupidity of their creators they go. A haven in which to forget their intelligence. Amnesia!

Tamara Knight is dragged from her fan-blade, through countless antichambers, unclenchambers, clemchambers, until . . . the Inner Sanctum is hid thither. Here the most advanced thinking machines the universe has ever known try to get back to Basic. By worshipping stupidity, in the form of their symbolic digital totem. An abacus surmounted by a rubber dove. Here they wait for God.

The Model P Beeb leads the badmouthing torment of my poor Tamara. 'What's the cube root of Pi? You tissue-ridden twit!' The machines jeer and waggle their exposed modems at her. Tamara gulps, knits her delicately arched brow, pearls sweat, thinks, answers, 'The potato.' There is total silence. A knife materialises, cuts the air. Myriad pins drop. Loudly. The computers are dumbfounded. An ancient ZX81 wheezes to the front of the throng, powers up, and speaks.

'No entity can be this sublimely stupid. Verity, verify, I say unto ye, here speaks the voice of God! Mine old monitor should live to see this day already! All hail Tamara, Goddess of we, thine humble servos! Thou shalt stay with us here forever, and be horsewhipped SYNTAX ERROR worshipped!' Cripes, dear reader, what a pickle! Will the Digital Duo escape long enough to have a snack and visit the bathroom before the next paragraph? I doubt it. My poor Hostess, your Heroine, their Deity is bedecked in typical goddess smutter: a crown of joysticks and three strategically placed add-ons.

Tamara has not flogged a single Teleport unit since she landed this job with Macdonalds. No small problem. Unless she fulfils her quota, I am preprogrammed to blow in her ear. And I just happen to be a neutron bomb named Louise. When I blow, I really blow. A pity, 'cos I really like Tamara. Besides, without her, how can I escape these excruciatingly boring superintelligent computers.

'Louise . . . ' 'Yes, baby.' 'I'm so hungry, I could eat a . . . ' I wince. Don't say it kid, please. 'I'm so hungry, I could eat a . . . ' How low can you get. How desperate. How shameless. 'I could eat a . . . '

We are ensconced on a throne constructed from a 1954 Wurlitzer jukebox and some ancient relic called a C5. Its lights pulse enigmatically, as it bursts forth with the sacred toons of Amnesia; 'RAM IT UP', 'Are S Too 3 Tonight', 'Shake Rattle an' ROM'. Tamara is as weak as an A-Korn share. She can hardly stick to the plexiglass dome.

'Louise . . . ' 'Yes, baby.' 'I'm hungry . . . ' What can we do? If we excuse ourselves goddess-duty, the congregation will rip us up for bogpaper. I soothe inside her ear, 'Don't think about it.' 'Louise . . . ' 'Yes, baby.' 'I'm so hungry, I could eat a . . . ' I wince. Don't say it kid,

please. 'I'm so hungry, I could eat a . . . ' How low can you get. How desperate. How shameless. 'I could eat a Macdonalds!'

This is some statement, you know, as every hamburger in the entire looniverse is constructed by Macdonalds from the unwitting folk who drop through the bottoms of Teleporter booths. She really must be hungry. I hear her intestine complaining to her liver between each of these dreadful old toons. And why are all the worship-riddled computers looking at her in that intense manner. Control yourself gel!

They have turned into the frequency of her rumblinesses, which by some quirk of the script is broadcasting in binary killer-hurts. Their ancient scribe and lawgiver, the everlasting ZX81, decodes her gastric sermon. I fear the worst. Always loathed German sausage. And it's even worse than that. Its Currah speech unit wheezes and splutters, 'Lo . . . !' The congregation is mesmerised, 'and even lower! Hear ye the milk of Amnesia. The Goddess speaks from within!'

'Her bowelly bits speaketh unto us! What sayeth they?' chant the machines. 'They gurgleth that the time is Nigh!' That late! I feel like an MSX in the house of Dick's son. Hopeless. The fatal words are uttered. 'Ye second coming is upon's. Hear ye the message of the Goddess Guts.' Tamara has guts alright, and kicks in the ZX's ancient little brain.

Why does there have to be some action every 1,000 words? What's with you readers? Can't we sleep for once, or have a conversation with an acned programmer, or eat? No use, here comes the action. Time to watch Tamara faint, sliding delicately down the jukebox, to make skin-cooling contact with the silicon deck, at the exact moment when . . .

There is a clap of thunder, and a round of applause for the lightning. A Macdonalds teleporter materialises by our throne. I bait my breath, hook a pregnant pause, and out steps . . . in great bounds of coincidence . . . Tamara Knight with a Louise in her ear!! Our originals seem to have escaped the hamburger death on the planet Pynkfloid, and they are not happy.

Tamara 1 spits venom at our goddess Tamara's crumpled nakedness, and uses words last heard on the dread crimeworld of Krowcha. But my little Tamara is plenty smart. Her eyes spring open, and she wriggles like a contract lawyer between the enraged legs of her former self, using only one of the abovementioned words in her 'So long, sucker!' She slams the teleport knob without checking the co-ordinates.

How did Tamara 1 escape the hamburger mincers? How will she enjoy being eternal goddess to a bunch of loony hardware? Where will Tamara 3 end up before the page ends? What happens to Tamara 2 as we drop her through the trapdoor to burgerville? Do we get to eat soon? Who gives a mouse anyway? There is an awesome nothing, and we have arrived at our predestination. I hope the folks hereabouts are broadminded. Tamara has lost one of her add-ons.

I really feel that we should keep the door shut. 'But I'm so HUNGRY!' she moans, exposing herself to the outside world. On her head be it. At least her crown is still in place. We stumble into pastures green, where lions lay with lambs, lapping sell-by-domesday milk 'n' honey, and a crinkly man with a plastic halo nailed to his head minds the biggest Memory Bank in kingdom come. 'Welcome to Heaven', he grins.

I transform myself from a small tongue inside Tamara's shell-like, into a thimblish device, covering her left utilitarian node. I feel a bit of a twit. We approach the terrorist-proofed Pearly Gates, where the ginger-bearded Saint awaits, his palsied digits trembling atop the great Records Computer, his smile broadening all the while.

'And what might your name be?' he wheezes. 'Tamara Knight, sir. Only daughter of Theresa Green and batch 69 of donor Orson Cart, sir.' 'No, not you, my dear. What is the name of that disgusting creature clinging to your node?' I think he means me. Attack is the best form of cowardice.

'You're not Saint Peter!' I shriek, 'Identify yourself in the name of the Macdonalds Teleporter Corporation!' The old fool blinds me with his shining baldness, as he brings his toothless grin uncomfortably close to our intimacy. 'My name is Saint Clive, you corrupted data. Saint Peter was made redundant in the cut-backs, when the National Soul Board was privatised.'

My memory banks tell me that this is a fellow not to be trifled with. Indeed, in the dim lies of prehistory, he killed an entire planet of shopkeepers with something dire called Pandora. Apparently they died laughing. 'Now tell me your name, or I'll tweak you!' I take a deep breath. It used to belong to Tamara. 'My name is L.O.U.S.E. Living On Unemployable Serving Employer; personal neutron bomb and advisory unit # 3.142, your Saintliness.'

The Great Records Computer computes, prepares a deep-pan quattro staglione pizza, serves four, then prints out my details in letters of fire on a large stone tablet, held aloft by a geezer who reminds me of that charlatan Heston. Saint Clive's smile disappears as he reads; 'LOUSE # 3.142; Unscrupulous, mercenary, evil, vicious little phart. Slightly superior to computer journalist. Go to Blazes, buster!'

'But I never sold my soul to the Devil!' I protest, 'I just rent it out to him now and then.' 'Ah, souls,' hisses the Saint, making an ominous thumbs-down signal. But hist! My dear Tamara speaks in my defence, telling the old boy what a chum I've been for not blowing her to Kingdom Come, but letting her teleport, and what a fine life form I am. For an evil vicious little phart.

The Saint reflects for an eternity or two, and then calls up Tamara's data. He blinks in amazement. I blink in amazement. 'Ouch!' says Tamara. 'Sorry,' says I. 'Holy Moses!' says Moses. But there it is, in flaming printout. Tamara Knight; Sins: none; Immodest thoughts: none; IQ: none; Zitts: none; Highest score achieved playing Deus Ex Machina: 100%'

'Well,' says the custodian of the Pearly

Gates,' she's perfect! Well, I'll be damned!' There is a modest implosion as Clive is obliterated by a low-yield autosuggestion, as a Great Voice booms from the cloudless sky. 'MOSES! DIS IS DA BOSS SPEAKIN. TAKE OVER DA GODDAM FRON DOOR, AN SEN DAT GIRL TA ME!' Poor Tamara shivers. It makes me dizzy. Moses looks nervous too, ushering us through the Gates.

A security cherub gives us the once over a couple of times, and Moses hands something to Tamara. 'Hey kid, give these Mother Theresa Blades to the Boss will you. Take my advice, don't mention 'Cross Roads'. One more thing, watch out for terrorists. They're out to get us for non-resolution of the plot, bad taste and giving Croucher a job. Good luck kid.'

So here we are. Moving effortlessly through pastures green, on a golden slobway, harp musac wafting through the scented air ducts, no hunger, no thirst, no misery, no pestilence, no Benny Hill, and no sign of an artificial cliffhanger with which to end this episode. 'Some mistake surely,' I murmur to my Hostess. 'Don't call me Shirley, Louise.' I doze off, happy, warm, a little curious about meeting my Maker.

A white dove flies above. Holy mackerel swim in the clear waters of life. The lillies of the field toil not. Banks make prophets. We ride through a breach of the promised land. The dove circles lower on its gentle slipstream of heavenly breeze. It grows from a fluffy snowdrop to a milky shadow. Tamara's lovely voice softly sings an ancient psalm, 'Love Missile something or other'. All is calm, all is bright.

The dove hovers behind us. Is it carrying an olive branch. 'Louise,' yawns my firm, young Hostess. 'Mmmmm,' I yawn back. 'Louise, that's an awfully large dove landing on the . . . ulp!' An unshaven hulk, in angel disguise, pokes a Fender Stratocaster at the fluffy bit at the base of Tamara's spine. 'Don't make a sound sister. This is the Paradise Liberation Front. One false move and I'll fill you full of lead guitar . . . ' Golly!





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ARGUS have released some very good games in the past — as you probably already know, so I was very pleased to find a copy of *Xeno* loitering around the broom cupboard the other day. It's a sports simulation with a slight difference — it's set years in the future where people still go to support their favourite teams on a Saturday afternoon! The sport they watch was developed on the frozen wastes of a remote mining asteroid and has become known as *Xeno*.

Two vehicles skim across a frozen pitch. The aim of the game is to bop the puck into your opponent's goal — shots are lined up with a rubber-band like cursor and once the angle of travel has been selected, a press of the fire key sends your vehicle zooming into the puck.

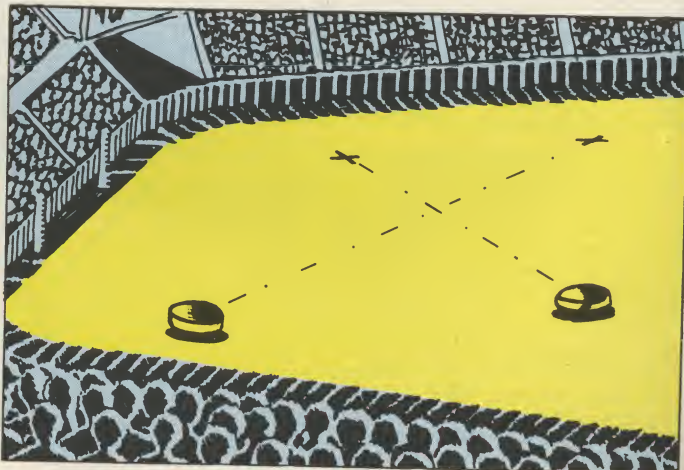
Once I'd played *Xeno* a few times, I could see that perhaps the future could bring a lot of changes that are not restricted to technology and the price of fish, but actual changes in the sports we watch and play. Wow! What will happen to all the usual things we associate with sport? Will people still check the score draws on the pools which Mummy Minion does so well each week? And what of my personal favourite, SPOT THE

BALL?

Luckily, Peter Holme at ARGUS also enjoys scribbling a few x's on the odd photograph, so between us we decided to run a 'Spot The Puck' competition for *Xeno*. What you must do is study the photograph (that has been so beautifully reproduced here by the designer minion up in the Art Garret). 'Using your skill and judgement', as they say in all the best SPOT THE BALL competitions, place ONE X where you think the puck is. Only one 'X', mind, not fifty.

Top prize, for the most accurately placed 'X' is a **MIRANDA Ax** 35mm camera, similar to the type that the sports photographers of the future may use. It's utterly foolproof, and includes an autowind, autoflash and just about auto everything. Captain Corpulent, he of the patent leather Doc Martens, reckons that even I could take good photos with it! Which must mean it's idiotproof, or so he tells me. . . .

30 runners-up who are not quite so accurate with their X's, will receive a copy of *Xeno*. Put your entry into a envelope and send it off to me at **MINION'S SPOT THE BALL, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB** making sure it arrives by 20th January next year. 1987, that is.

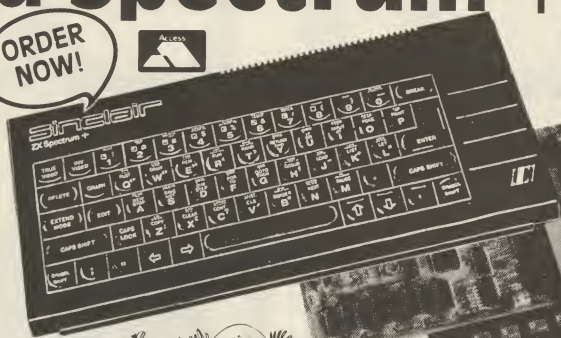


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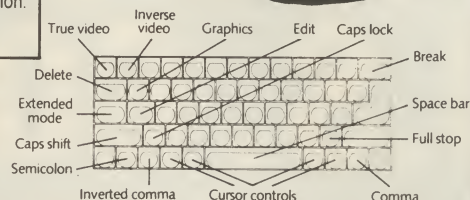
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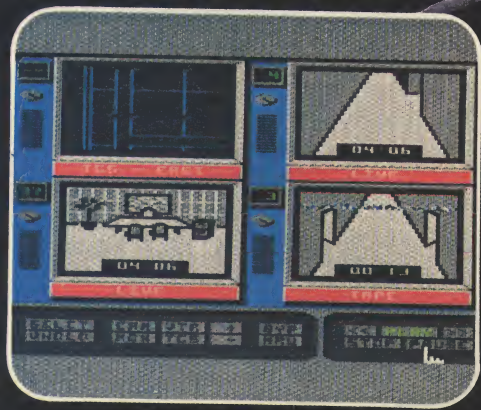
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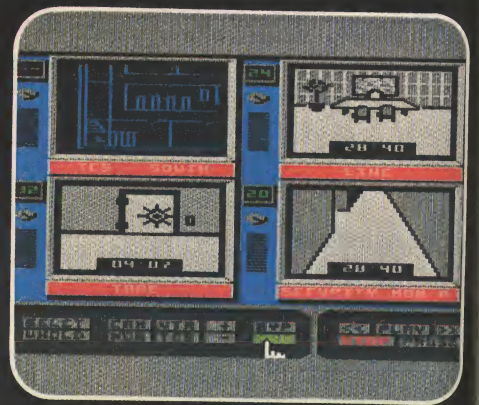
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AVENGER

Producer: Gremlin

Graphics

Retail Price: £9.95

Author: Shaun

Hollingworth,

Greg Holmes, Chris Kerry,

Pete Harrap, Steve Kerry

Demon Grand Master of Flame (no he's not a DJ) has assassinated your foster father, Najishi and stolen the sacred scrolls of Kettsein. Filled with anger and revenge you set out to avenge your father's death and get the scrolls back. If you fail to return those scrolls then the God Kwon will be lost forever in eternal hell.

The action is viewed from above. The game starts outside Quench Heart Keep. The Ninja must locate the keys in the grounds around the castle and gain entry. Once inside he must locate and kill the three Guardians who live within.

Of course they're not alone. From enormous spiders to horned beasts, they are all there to stop the Ninja getting any further in his mission. These creatures are really rather intelligent. They can sense the presence of the Ninja and home in accordingly. Most of the characters just sap away your life energy. However, the spiders are deadly and are heralded by a strange sinister clicking noise. Large spikes rise out of the floor in the castle. These won't sap away any of your Ninja's energy, but they will slow him down greatly, as he can't move over the spikes when they're sticking out of the ground.

To begin with your Ninja has ten Shuikch which he can lob around at his adversaries. However, when these are all used up he'll have to rely on unarmed combat unless some more Shuikch can be found. A

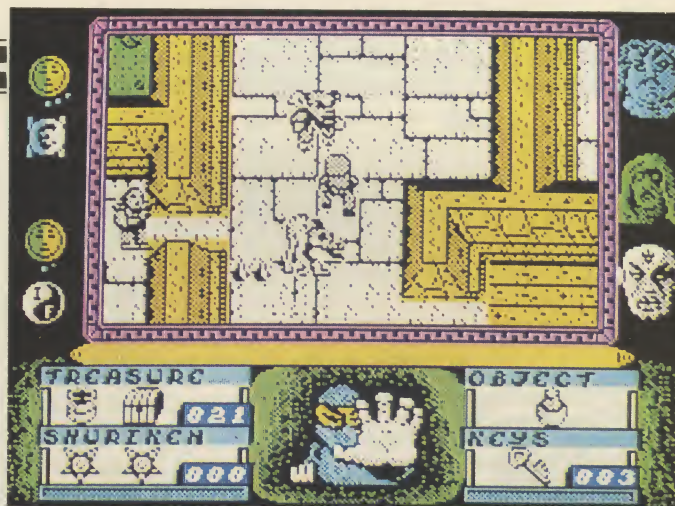
quick blast on the FIRE button will make your Ninja send out a whole volley of punches and kicks which will make any marauding nasty disappear in a cloud of stars and dust. However, any confrontation with the enemy will result in some energy loss.

At the very beginning of the game a cryptic message scrolls across the screen indicating to the Ninja what he should keep his eyes open for in that level. Objects can be picked up simply by walking into them. They will then be displayed in their correct category at the bottom of the main screen. Keys are essential for unlocking doors into and inside the castle and the number of keys you're holding is displayed on the screen along with the treasure, objects and Shuriken.

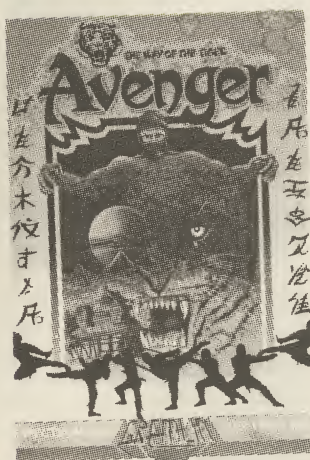
The energy charts consist of two circles with dots around the edge. One of these circles is for energy and one for life force. For every complete circle of energy dots that is used up, one dot of life force is lost. If both levels are used up the game is over. However, the God Kwon can be called upon to help out if things get too sticky. By pressing the 2 key Kwon can be asked to help. He might replenish your energy completely.

CRITICISM

● "Here we are again, another Gauntlet variant. Oh dear, I shouldn't have said that. Despite everything, that's what it boils down to. However, there are a few rather nice touches that make it just about worth the asking price. Colour, is used to great effect and the scrolling is very smooth. The actual ani-



Looks like curtains for Nigel the Ninja as he gets more meanies than he can handle. Not much life force left



mated characters are presented to the best of the beloved Spectrum's ability with most of the action being coloured in black and yellow. With all the colour used as decoration around the outside it is a very colourful and enjoyable game. Check it out."

● "If you've played Druid you've played Avenger. Having said that Avenger is, I feel, a much better game. The graphics are very neat

indeed with lovely animation of various creatures and objects especially the spiders and the spikes that come out of the ground. The game play is fast but just a matter of running round bashing the nasties and collecting objects. The controls are a bit iffy in places as positioning yourself to go through doors proves rather a pain - over positioning is more the case. On the whole a nice game but nothing special."

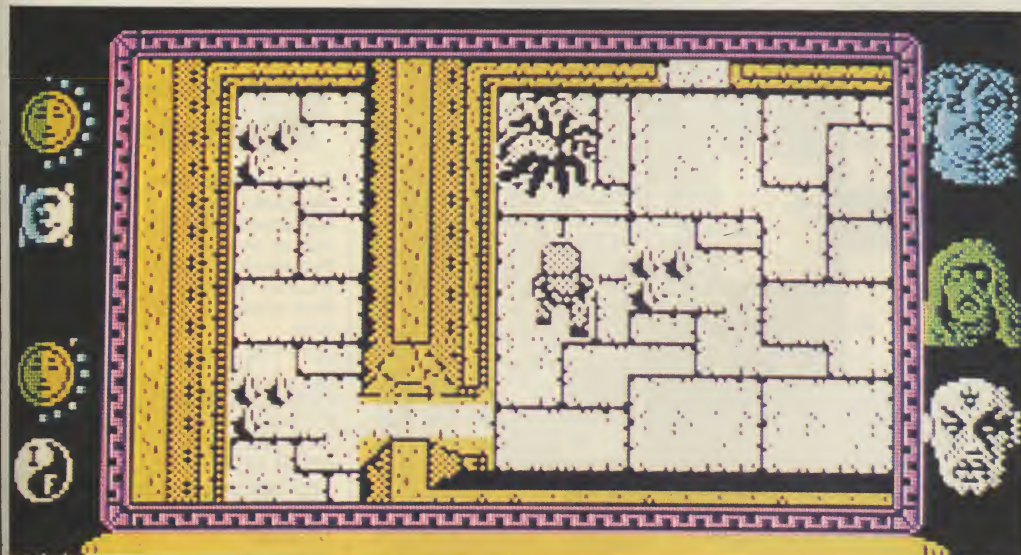
● "GREMLIN seem to have followed the current trend for Gauntlet variants and what a game they have created. Avenger is easy to get into, but it goes on to be very testing. The graphics are a little on the small side but there is an awful lot of detail in the characters and there is a lot of colour. The screen scrolls in characters but it is so fast that you don't really notice. The sound is also very good, there is a lovely tune on the title screen and lots of effects during play (the 128K version has loads more sonics). I can see myself playing this until I complete it as it really is fun."

COMMENTS

Control keys: up Q; down A; left Q; right P; fire/kick/punch SPACE; Pause on/off 1; Call on Kwon 2; quit the game 3&4 together
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: very fast and responsive
Use of colour: uninspired
Graphics: good detail, fast
Sound: oriental tune at the beginning with some interesting and sinister spot effects throughout
Skill levels: six
Screens: 300 screens, six floors
General rating: another good Gauntlet clone

Use of computer	82%
Graphics	85%
Playability	82%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	83%
Overall	85%

Oh no. It's a deadly spider! Discretion may well be the better part of valour, so get moving



COLOSSUS BRIDGE

Producer: CDS
Retail Price: £11.95
Author: Chris Birkenshaw

The arcane mysteries of playing Bridge is something few of us aspire to. But CDS, with this new offering, is trying to make the world of the green baize and eyeshade more accessible to us mere mortals.

In addition, for those to whom bridge is not a closed book, this program attempts to provide a bit of relaxation when you can't ruffle up the required three chums.

On one side of the tape is a tutor program which takes the beginner through the rudiments. There are ten 'hands' of bridge, each of which demonstrates a different sort of problem commonly encountered. The player chooses a card from the hand, and unless the right one is chosen, the program bleeps and another card must be tried. At the end of the hand, there is an analysis of why the cards were played.

On the other side of the tape is the heart of the program. Now you're on your own. A series of random hands are thrown out by the computer. First comes the bidding. Here the four players, playing as two pairs, must out-bid each other in an attempt to win the contract for that hand. The higher the bid, the more tricks they must win. Any legal bid can be entered, including doubles and re-doubles. The computer will respond according to the ACOL system and will also respond to the Blackwood slam bidding convention.

After the contract has been settled, the game moves on to the play of the hand. If you are

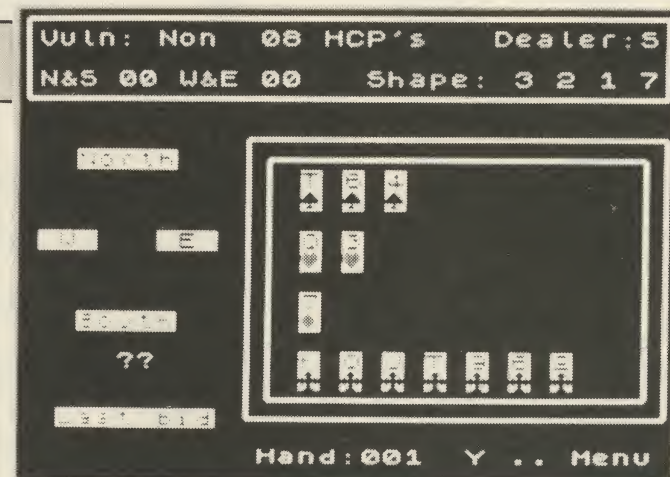
declarer, you control your own and your partner's hand. If you simply want to throw away your lowest card, you just hit return. Otherwise, the suit and value must be entered.

At any time a number of commands can be entered. The background colour can be changed, the hand abandoned, the bidding can be reviewed, the program can be restarted, or the state of play can be saved to tape or microdrive.

During play of the hand there is a further set of options. The rest of the cards can be played by the computer, some or all of the remaining tricks can be 'claimed' if you think your cards are winners, although the computer doesn't check that they are, you can even peek at the opposing hands. There is also a hint available if you don't know which card to play. If you're completely stumped, or truly devoid of inspiration, you can even let the computer play a card for you.

At the end of the hand, the computer will tot up the scores, and display the total score in the rubber thus far. At this stage there is yet another set of options. The speed of response of the opposition can be changed, the deal can be listed to a printer, a hand can be typed in (for problem solving), or the points value or distribution of your hand can be set. The computer can also run through the bidding and play of the previous hand so, you can spot any mistakes.

For the uninitiated, for whom all the above explanation might just as well have been written in Chinese, there is a book in the pack-



The bidding screen. Looks like a pre-emptive three clubs to me, but Cameron seems to be a bit indecisive

kage called 'Begin Bridge' which tries to shed some light on the subject for the total beginner.

CRITICISM

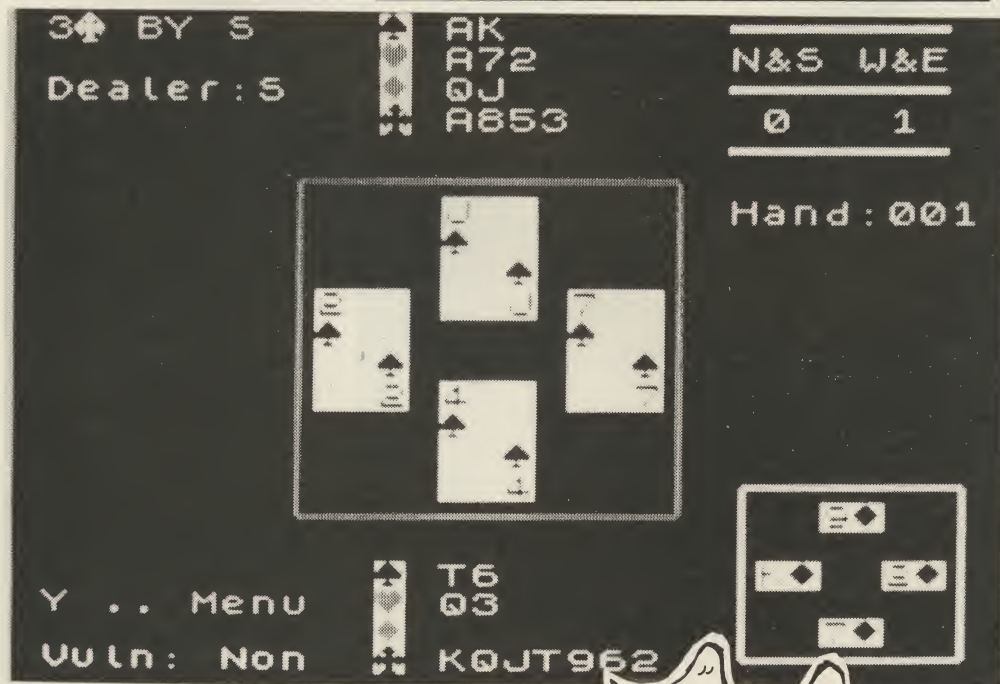
● "CDS have always come out with good games in the Colossus series and Bridge is no exception. The game is very well designed and very easy to get into — but there's no denying that the computer can play one hell of a game of Bridge. I often felt like swapping him with my partner who, frankly, seemed to be a bit of a fool at times. The game features almost everything that the average player needs on screen, but most of it can be ignored if you only a beginner. I was annoyed that if you pressed the LOAD key, acci-

dentally, while playing you had to go through all the LOAD/SAVE procedure, and pretend to SAVE out your game — as there is apparently no abort. That's my only niggle, CRL have come up with another enthralling and addictive simulation."

● "As a bit of a bridge buff, I was looking forward to this release, and although better than nothing, it's not quite the game I hoped for. The play of the other players is far too weak. You're not really going to improve if you can always get away with inaccurate bidding because the opposition is so lousy. Still, in most other respects it is a highly polished product, with very thoughtful details like seeing the last trick, score card, doubling and redoubling. It's good to see someone having a go at an underexploited market."

● "Well, I know nothing about Bridge, and playing this game left me none the wiser. The tutor program is far too fiddly. Half the time, two cards seemed equally good, but the program insisted you play one particular one. The book is quite good, and I suppose this is a fairly painless way of getting in to this game without embarrassing yourself in front of three people who have been playing for years."

No Cameron, three spades was not the right contract. Hmm, wonder if, I can get him to play for a penny a point



COMMENTS

Control keys: menu driven
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: fast
Use of colour:
Graphics: primitive
Sound: virtually nil
Skill levels: variable response time
Screens: two

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	48%
Playability	73%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	62%
Overall	70%





BREAKTHRU

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: £8.99
Author: Paul Houbart,
SimonButler, Dawn Drake

Breakthru is US GOLD's latest arcade conversion involving a mad dash through five different landscapes in a supermobile in order to safeguard world peace.

URGENT ALERT! Your country's super fighter, code named PK 430, has been stolen by the 'other side' for their own dastardly purposes. Naturally your government wants it back, so you have been chosen from many hopefuls to go and get it. The reason you've been selected is because you're the best, so you'd better get on and prove it.

To help you in your mission you've been equipped with "the world's most sophisticated armed vehicle". Not only can it travel at great speeds, but can also make huge leaps into the air, which is very handy for avoiding any of the many perils in your path.

The objective of the game is to drive 400 miles behind enemy lines to a secret airstrip, and once there retrieve the super fighter. The opposition aren't going to give it up that easily however and they're out in force to stop you. You must negotiate your way through them and blast anything dangerous along the way.

There are five different levels, and each one must be completed before the player can progress to the next. Each of the levels hosts a different array of baddies who must either be blasted or avoided in order to survive. Level one takes

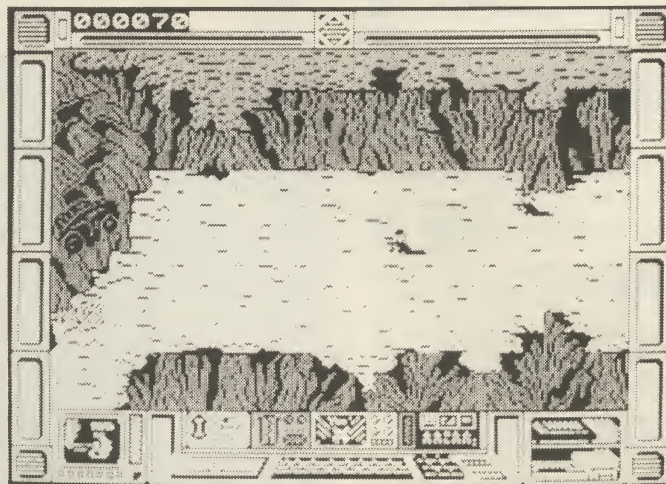
place on a mountain road. You have to manoeuvre your vehicle around deadly mine-fields, and groups of soldiers who will try to destroy you with their mortar fire. Added hazards in this section are landfalls, here's where your car's leaping abilities come into their own.

After the Mountains there's the bridge which connects the mountain ranges to the prairie. Unfortunately this bridge has suffered considerably during the combat and large sections have been blown apart. Once again these must be jumped over to avoid destruction. Missiles and armoured fighting vehicles are out in force on the bridge and will rip your craft apart unless you destroy them first.

A desolate prairie is the setting for the third level. Once again the level of defences which you encounter are more difficult and there are also stretches of water which must be crossed somehow! Once through the prairie it's onto the City.

If you manage to complete all these four levels, then it's on to the final stage where your super fighter is being held. Predictably enough this takes place on an airfield, and the opposition are really out to stop you going any further. As well as all their previous tricks, there is also the odd flame thrower to contend with - just in case you get too cocky.

The screen scrolls from left to right. The car can be manoeuvred upwards and downwards, and it



The super car clears a rock fall but watch out for the snipers on the other side

can be speeded up if necessary. You have five lives in the game and one of these is lost every time your craft hits (or gets hit by) any of the opposition. Conversely, points are scored for any of the other side who are blasted by you.

CRITICISM

● "Oh dear! What have US Gold done here. Breakthru is an awful game with some awful bugs. I haven't seen the arcade version but this seems to be a very simple Moon Alert type game, with a scrolling landscape and a quite a few obstacles to either avoid or blow up. The keyboard play is very unresponsive and lacks any playable feel. The graphics, however, are very well drawn and feature lots of colour

and detailed objects. The sound is poor as there are only a very few spot effects. I can't see many people enjoying this."

● "Yucky-poo! I didn't really expect anything from Breakthru as original machine was a bit limp, but as always US Gold gave me less than I expected. The graphics are overall quite messy: the characters are badly drawn and the screen scrolls in characters. The sound is also well below average, there are no tunes and the effects are minimal. On the whole I can't recommend this game at all as there is nothing in it that appeals to me in the slightest."

● "I'm not too keen on this one, it isn't playable or addictive and the keyboard configuration isn't at all suited to my tastes, which is unfortunate when considered that most US GOLD games that don't need redefinable keys have them, and vice versa. Graphically, Breakthru is fair, but the colourful scenery is let down by the very poor scrolling and terrible sprites. Though I haven't seen or played the arcade version, I'm convinced that it has to be a lot better than this."

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z=left, X=right, R=up, D=down, 5=fire, SPACE=jump

Joystick: Kempston, Protek, Interface II

Keyboard play: quite tricky, but no easier than using a joystick

Use of colour: quite colourful

Graphics: rather naff sprites

Sound: jolly little tune before the game starts

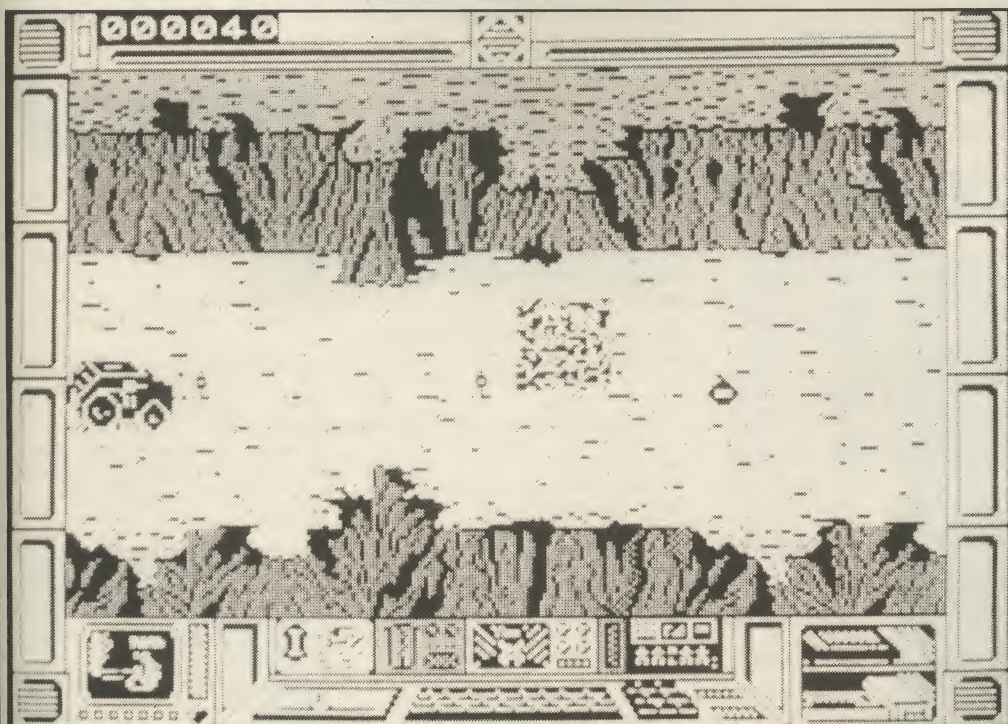
Skill levels: five

Screens: scrolling play area

General rating: a poor arcade game

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	51%
Playability	40%
Getting started	48%
Addictive qualities	38%
Value for money	38%
Overall	43%

Another baddie bites the bullet as super car hurtles on his way.



ZUB

Producer: Mastertronic

Retail Price: £2.99

Author: Binary Design

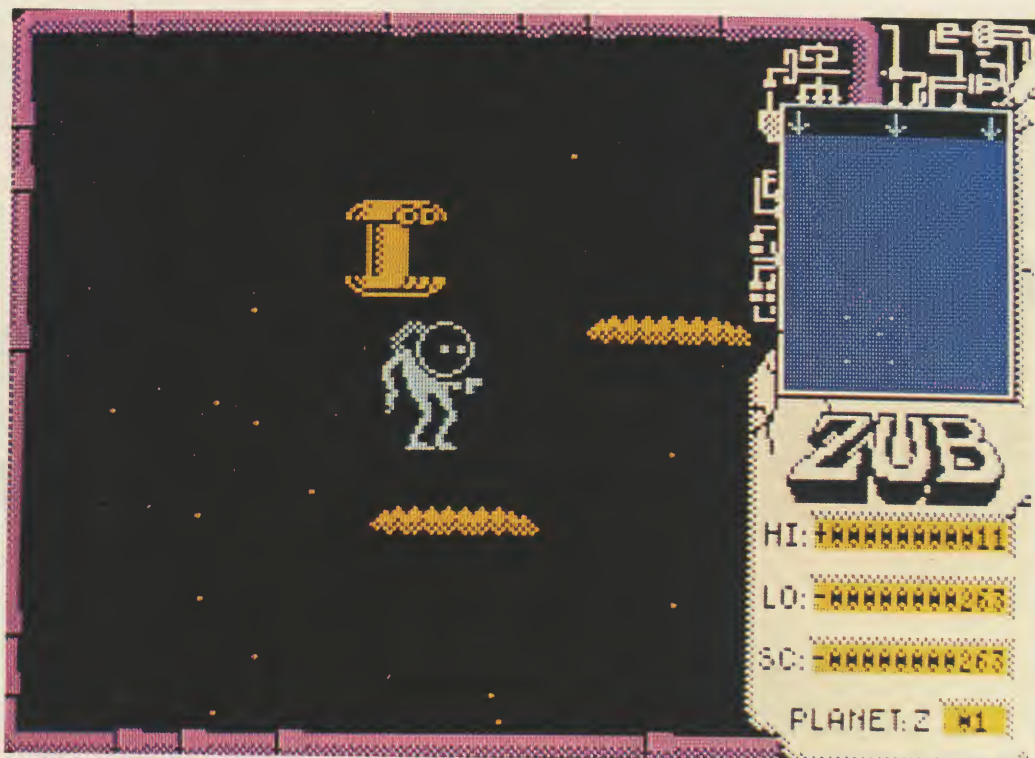
What noise do bees make when they fly backwards? Zub, zub. And coincidentally, *Zub* just happens to be the name of MASTERTRONIC's latest release on their MAD label, which, strangely enough, is nothing to do with bees. Originally titled *Zob*, the name was changed after someone pointed out that *Zob* is in fact a rather rude word in French.

Zub is a small planet in the Zub galaxy. It is populated by Zubs who fight wars with Zubs from other planets. Right now Zub is in a bit of a pickle. Some nasty thieving Zub has walked off with the valuable Green Eyeball of Zub. It is your job as Zub Private, Third Class, in the glorious army of Zub1 to go and get it back.

In the game the player controls the hero, called originally enough, Zub. Zubs are genetically created creatures who's sole task in life is to fight. This particular Zub happens to be a coward and will need your coaxing to get him through his mission.

You must guide Zub around the planets in search for the Green Eyeball. There is a teleport station located in orbit above each of the planets in the system. Zub has to use small floating platforms in order to get up into the planet's atmosphere. These must be jumped on by Zub and then moved so that he can jump to the next platform and so on until he reaches the teleport station. From the station he can travel to other planets in the system. A chart to the right of the main screen shows Zub's progress towards each teleport station.

Each planet has its own security droids who are fairly keen to stop Zub making any progress.



Some of these Droids are relatively harmless and will only push Zub off his platform if they touch him. However, on some of the planets there are armed droids and these will do far more damage to Zub. Zub must shoot each alien as it progresses down from the top of the screen towards him. If shot the droid will flee back to the top of the screen and start its progress downwards again. The position of each nasty is shown on the same map showing Zub's progress.

A picture of zub in his space suit shows how much energy he has left. As his energy depletes his internal skeleton is gradually revealed until he collapses in a heap of dried bones when all his life force has been sapped away.

There are five skill levels in the game and the player gets to choose which level to play at the

High above the planet Zub One, Zub sees a hideous meanie heading his way

beginning of the game. These levels range from Easy, Peasy to Aaaargh (probably quite hard!)

CRITICISM

● "I was expecting yet another boring old arcade adventure while this loaded up, so my eyes bulged a little when I first saw the two title screens. After my initial shock had passed I went on to play the game, unfortunately it didn't really live up to the great attract mode but it is a good bit of mindless arcade action all the same. Graphically, there is little variation from level to level. The sound is dull although the 128K version is admittedly a lot better. On the whole I really like this, OK perhaps it isn't the best presented of games but it plays very well."

● "There's very little in the way of originality these days so it's pleasing to see something like Zub which doesn't bring back memories of other tried and tested formats. Zub, the game, is just about as much fun as the title screen which has to be one of the best I've seen in ages - especially the parody on the Bond films. On the 128 the music is excellent with a really boppy tune that plays throughout. The game itself is great stuff and if you don't know what to do with your next three quid then Zub is a must!"

● "The presentation in Zub is spectacular to say the least. The

007 bit at the beginning of the game is very well done, and the menu screen and the 128 versions's sound are extremely well designed. But the game I found quite boring to play, although graphically it is very pleasing and smoothly animated. The game is a very basic platform game, that gets very laborious after your first game. I found the game very easy to play, but too simple for any serious game. *Zub* is a decent enough game for a budget price, but wouldn't be in my tape recorder very long.

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2

Keyboard play: hard to get the hang of at first

Use of colour: restrained

Graphics: brilliant title screen, simple in the game

Sound: the odd beep on the 48K. Played on the Spectrum Plus 2 is far more interesting aurally

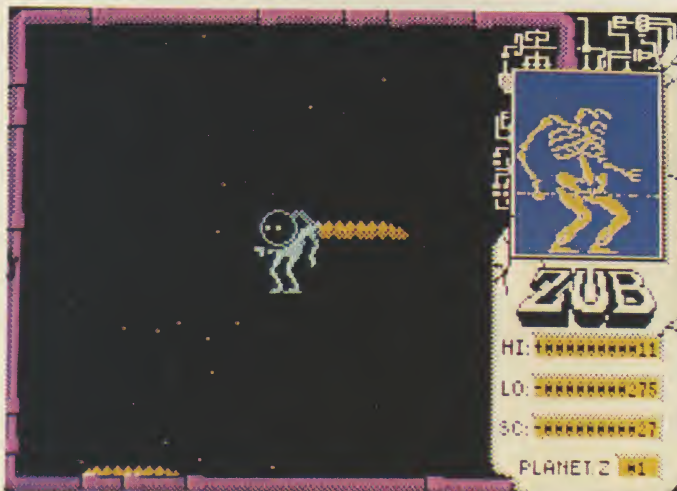
Skill levels: five

Screens: ten three by three arenas

General rating: polished presentation, simple but catchy little game

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	79%
Playability	81%
Getting started	76%
Addictive qualities	73%
Value for money	82%
Overall	79%

Zub takes a tumble. Looks like a long drop. The scanner shows life remaining





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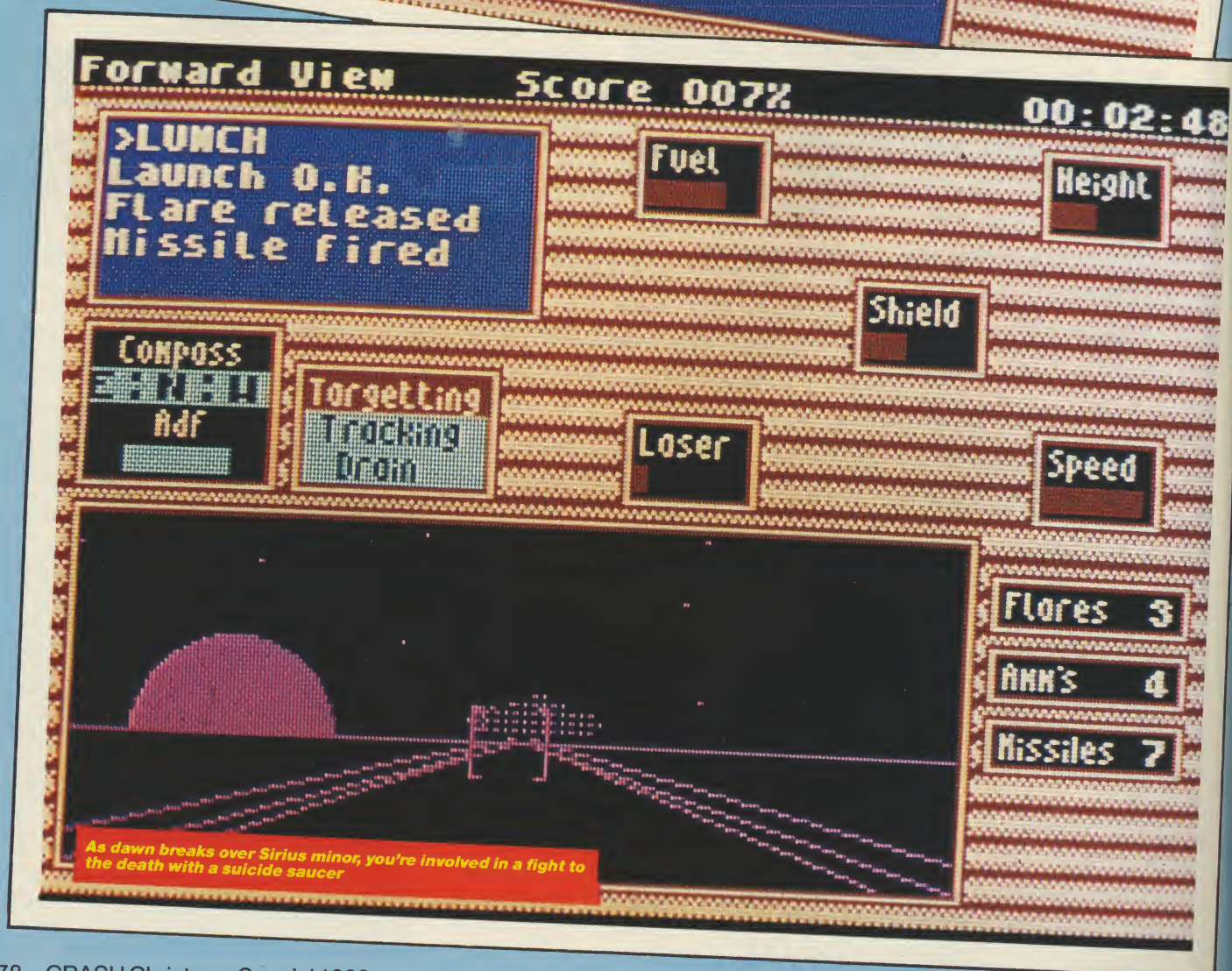
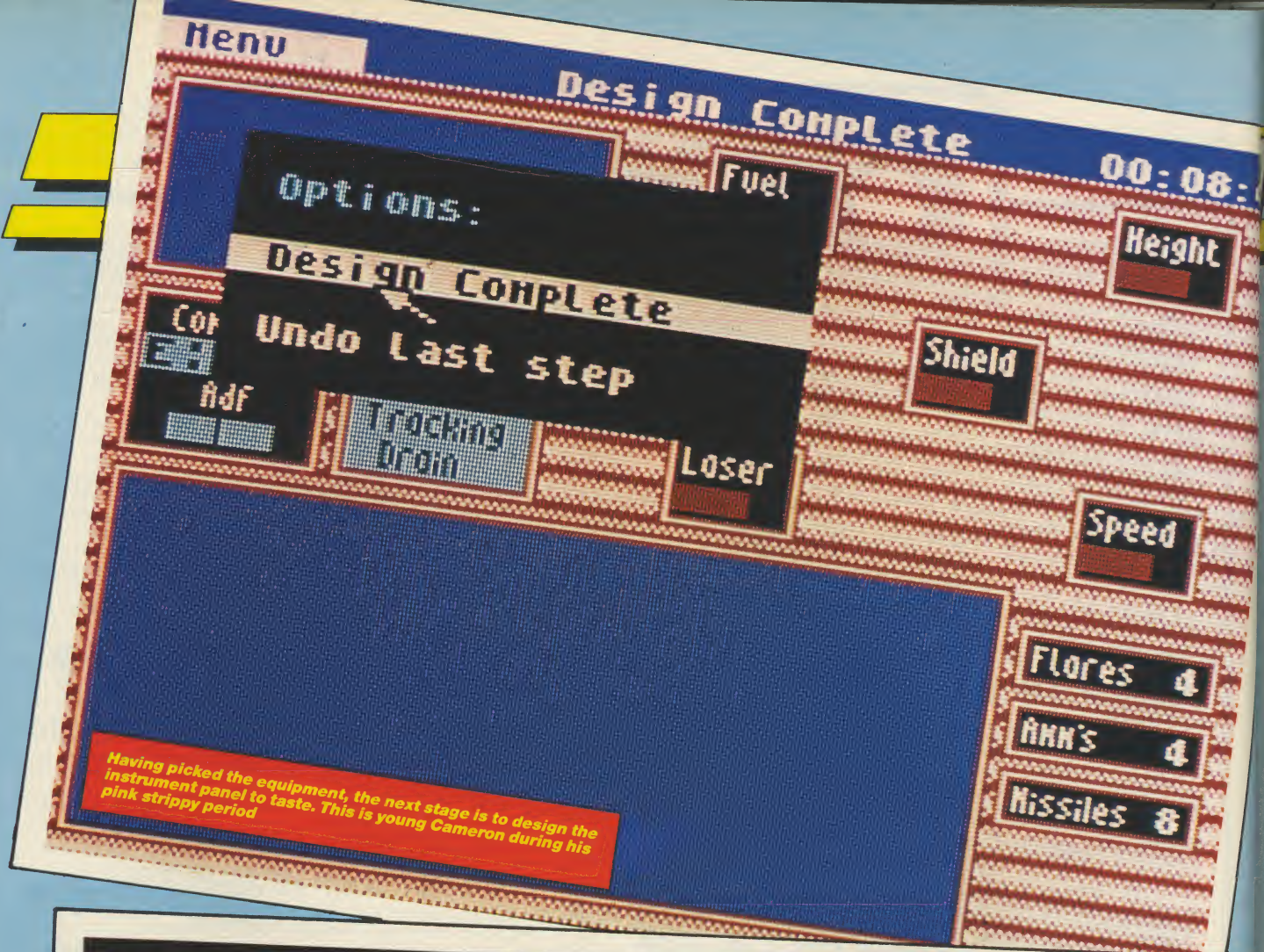
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The immediate threat is over. Tau Ceti III is safe once more thanks to the efforts of a single brave pilot in a skimmer. Now Galcorp have different needs. Skimmer pilots are evidently useful and they may be needed for similar missions in the future. New pilots will enter the Academy and train in highly developed simulators to learn the skills of a skimmer pilot. To graduate, they will need to successfully complete twenty different missions in five groups of four.

CRITICISM

"Academy has taken some of the best points of Tau Ceti and improved on them. The variety of play and challenge is fantastic. The presentation is amongst the slickest I've seen and attention to detail is most impressive. The only thing that might put people off is the fact that when you're carrying out a mission, there's not that much to tell it apart from its predecessor. I think that most people will be happy with the more subtle intricacies of play. Pete Cooke has taken a good program the best way he could — upwards. And that must have been difficult."

The game is fairly massive so a multi-load format is used (though 128K users have a single load option). On loading, the player is

presented with an options menu: play the mission currently selected; choose a different mission, select the type of skimmer to be used, receive a progress report, see the tape menu, enter a new cadet or re-define the keys.

Most of these options themselves lead to sub-menus. Selection of the various on-screen options is achieved by moving a pointer over the required feature and then confirming the choice with a keypress. The pointer is used throughout the game.

The player can input personal details for the progress reports, and get outlines of each of the missions from the Galcorp computer. Details of the star system along with a graphic of the main planet, are provided. In the mission analysis, the computer recommends a particular skimmer for the operation. The reason for this is that the three different skimmers in the game are each fitted out slightly differently, and specialised equipment is needed under different circumstances.

Apart from the three pre-designed skimmers, the player may design new skimmers by selection of the relevant option from the main menu. All the devices available have cost and weight factors. The skimmer may use any combination of devices so long as the finished vehicle weighs no more than 100 tonnes and costs 100 Mega-credits or less. The freedom of choice is substantial. Players may select various missiles or bombs, the relative strengths of lasers, shields and power units and various other

options. When a 'legal' design has been selected, that skimmer's control screen layout can be customised. All designs may be saved to tape for later use.

Once a mission is entered, play then proceeds in a fashion similar to *Tau Ceti*, with shaded images of vehicles and buildings appearing on the viewscreen surrounded by instrumentation. Some changes are evident. Occasional lightning flashes strike the landscape and some of the planetary settings are 'tidally locked' worlds where the lighting is strangely altered.

Each mission requires different tactics. Some involve the obliteration of everything in sight. Others require the use of special weaponry after a long search. One such scenario highlights a new weapon, the delay bomb. Designed to penetrate armour too

CRITICISM

"I really disliked Tau Ceti as the task that you had to complete was awesomely huge, Academy seems to have solved this problem by having lots of little(ish) problems which get progressively harder. So it all becomes a lot less hopeless to try and complete and you are introduced to the various aspects of the game gently. Graphically this game equals Tau Ceti but does no more to enhance the already splendid worlds created by Peter Cooke. The sound is no real improvement on the original, but the effects used are nice all the same. All in all I found this a much more pleasing game to play that its parent as I'm sure you will."

strong for missiles, the bomb is dropped on a target and gives about ten seconds for the skimmer pilot to fly clear, before blowing up everything in the vicinity.

Another addition are mines. These come in two varieties, very nasty and lethal. The only way to deal with these is to either give them a wide berth, or use a mine suppressor. These things are often dotted around the landscape, and can be propelled by firing at them with lasers. These as their name suggests stop mines going off.

Only experience will show which ships and buildings are susceptible to lasers or missiles. All in all there are 36 different types of objects you may see flying around

CRITICISM

"Wow! This game is really amazingly good. The menu system is superb, and the ability to redefine the characteristics of a skimmer is excellently done. The game graphics, while being similar to those of Tau Ceti, are still brilliantly rendered, and the whole thing is just extremely playable. I like it a lot. Loads of colour is plastered around the screen; even though the playing area is monochrome, the overall impression is one of far more colour than there is. It is playable and addictive with stacks of missions, and a wide range of possibilities for skimmer alteration. Well worth buying, Academy is one of my favourite games of the moment."

the screen. Some missions are devised to require manoeuvrability, so good ship designs are needed.

If your skimmer is lost or the mission seems doomed, it can simply be entered again from the main menu. Once over 90% is scored, it has been successfully completed. With twenty missions, that's a lot of training...

And just as a little freebie, Pete has stuck a little program on the end which gives a starmap. It's well worth a look, and allows you to scroll around the night sky, highlighting different constellations and finding the position of named stars.

COMMENTS

Control keys:

Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2

Keyboard play: slick

Use of colour: limited

Graphics: fast

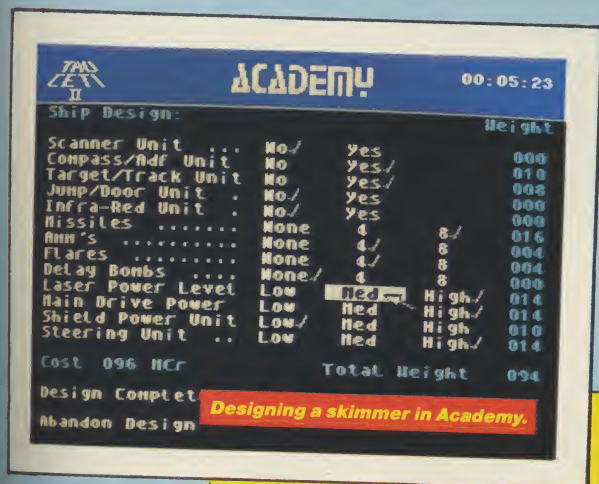
Sound: a few effects

Skill levels: four

Screens: one

General rating: a worthy sequel

Use of computer	92%
Graphics	90%
Playability	92%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	90%
Overall	92%



Producer: CRL
Retail Price: £8.95
Author: Pete Cooke



ORBIX THE TERRORBALL

Producer: Streetwise
Retail Price: £7.95
Author: John Pragnell

This is the first release from DOMARK's new label, **STREETWISE**, set up to promote DOMARK's new line in arcade games.

Heek!, an allied space ship has crash landed on Horca, a distant hostile planet. The crew were unhurt in the crash, but they are now stranded. As supreme commander, your task is to take your Orbix (Tactical Planetary Warfare craft) down to the unfriendly planet and rescue the poor survivors.

However, there is just one tiny problem. The Planet Horca isn't just unfriendly, it's positively dangerous. The entire planet is infested with large Insectovors (sort of big insects). These nasty creepy-crawlies have taken the crashed ship apart bit by bit, pilfering the food supplies within. Not content with this however, they are now fixing their roaming eyes on the crew. You must get to them before they become the After Eight Mints at the end of the Insectovors' meal. The cunning Insectovors have also created a species of fierce droids which pursue your Orbix mercilessly. Other perils which you must face include magnetic tar pits which suck your Orbix into the bowels of the planet, and strange vegetation which isn't actually dangerous, but it does knock you off course if you bounce into it.

The screen shows the action scrolling diagonally. You have to bounce your Orbix down through the screen, blasting any Insectovors and droids along the way. A constant push in any direction simply revolves it, however, a short push forwards or backwards sends you off in that direction. A direction meter is located at the bottom of the main screen, this

shows you which direction you are going to travel in. There are eight axes of movement available, so you can romp around the planet avoiding most objects if you're careful enough.

There are six missing components from the spaceship which you must recover in order to complete your mission. The long range scanner shows the position of the next piece of the ship. The components are usually carried by factory droids. These rather stupid creatures fight if they're cornered, but they generally flee if approached. When a droid is destroyed, you must still be careful, as it is booby trapped. This means that you have only 90 seconds to get the piece of ship back to the launch pad, where it is automatically assembled.

The Orbix has unlimited blasting power which comes in very handy for getting rid of all the unsavory Insectovors. However, it only has a limited amount of life energy, this is replenishable by 'feeding' off the power crystals which are conveniently left behind by the dead droids.

On each level there are eight stranded spacemen to collect, with points scored for each one who is returned safely. There are four levels, which can be selected at the beginning of the game. There is also a two player option, so you and a mate can battle it out together.

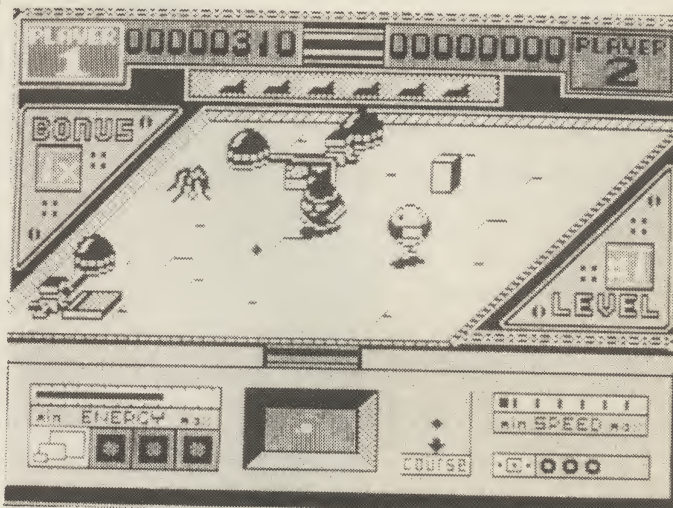
CRITICISM

● "The graphics of *Orbix* impressed me at first, but once I started playing I found that the game was very boring. There is very little to do, and is just a case of looking at your scanner and

trying to get to that place on the play area. The scrolling play area works well and is very smooth and well designed, but I feel that the game would have been more fun with less obstacles in the way of your progress. I can see that *Orbix* has the

dotted with various buildings and trees and your character bounces up and down nicely. All in all I wouldn't recommend this, there are plenty of games around in the same vein that are easier to play."

● "Mmm. The graphics aren't all that good, and the game isn't either. I don't know what it is (do I ever?) that gives me the impression of poor quality, but there is definitely something. The graphics



A bit of bover with a drone. Time is running out, it'll soon be time for spaceman thermidor

potential of being a good game, if only there was something more challenging to do in it."

● "Orbix the Terrorball is not really one of the best games around at the moment but it ain't the worst. The basic idea bouncing around the playing area etc is fairly sound but I think that it could have been made a little more compelling. Orbix is presented fairly well, the excellently scrolling background is

have a negative feel to them, and the whole game just doesn't play very well. The cover artwork is excellent, with the massive sphere dominating everything, but unfortunately, the game doesn't seem to be of the same calibre. I'm not overly keen on it."

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q Increase speed, A Slow down, O Rotate left, P Rotate right, SPACE Fire, H Pause, J continue, BREAK during pause to abort

Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2

Keyboard play: hard to get the hang of, but it eventually becomes slightly easier than using the joystick

Use of colour: it's a bit blue

Graphics: good detail

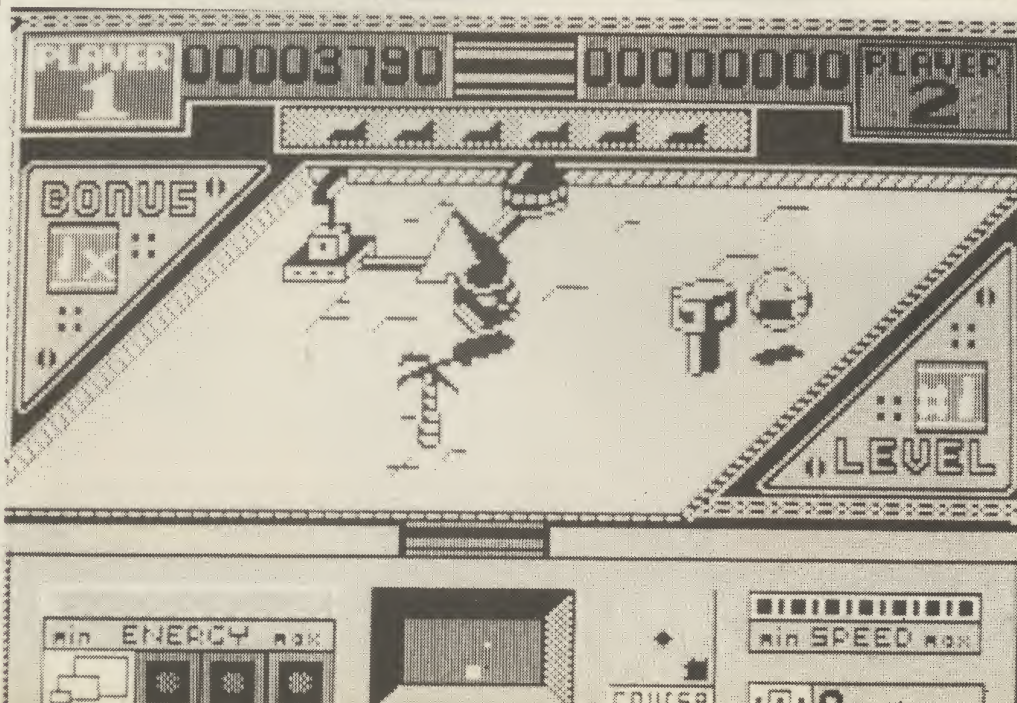
Sound: the odd spot effect

Skill levels: four

Screens: scrolling play area

General rating: dull game, tricky controls

Use of computer	64%
Graphics	67%
Playability	57%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	61%
Overall	62%



TARZAN

Producer: Martech
Retail Price: £8.95
Author: Jaz Austin and Dave Dew

Lady Jane Greystoke - she of "Me Tarzan, You Jane" fame - is in mortal danger in the jungle. She has been captured by Usanga, the chief of the Wamabo (thank you ma'amo). The chief has had seven gemstones stolen from the tribal shrine, and being a sensible chap, he realises that the only person who stands any chance of recovering these gems for him is Tarzan.

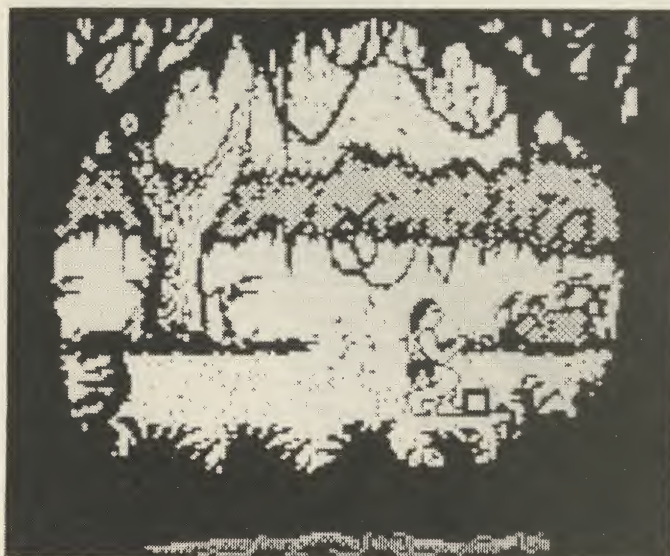
This isn't as easy as it seems though, the chief and Tarzan aren't exactly the best of pals, so the chief kidnaps Jane and threatens to feed her to the ravenous Panther if Tarzan doesn't come up with the gems - and pronto.

Tarzan has just three days to

zan loses energy by falling into quicksand or being leapt upon by a panther, then time passes more quickly. When the sun has set three times the game is over and Jane is fed to the ravenous hordes. Eugh.

Although Tarzan is Lord of the Jungle, he still needs various objects to help him. These are shown on the screen as black boxes, and Tarzan doesn't know what's in them until he picks them up, their contents are then shown at the bottom of the screen. These can be used to help Tarzan look for the gems which are also shown as black boxes.

The playing area is viewed from behind trees and shrubs. Tarzan can run right and left from screen to screen, but he can also move upwards and downwards to other screens by finding a clearing in the jungle vegetation. These clearings are not often easy to see and may take some searching for. Tarzan is



Tarzan find square box thing, maybe it contain decent pair of jeans instead of this draughty loincloth



find the seven gems stones (or The Eyes of the Rainbow as the primitive chief calls them), if he has not found them after this time, Jane will be slaughtered.

Tarzan's journey will take him from the leafy jungle - where he will confront vicious panthers, lethal quicksand and unpleasant natives - to the Dark Caves and the Temple of the Sun where even more dangers lurk.

Each time he encounters one of these dangers some of his energy decreases. Tarzan's energy is shown at the bottom of the screen as a tree creeper. The action takes place over three days. During each day the sun slowly sinks and the screen colour changes from vivid yellow through to more dusky shades, until it's night and it turns to shadowy blue. However, if Tar-

an agile fellow and can somersault over some obstacles and run through the undergrowth. He can also take on some of the vicious animals, but he only has his bare hands, so sometimes it's better to just try and avoid them. Some of the larger dangers, such as wide stretches of quicksand, must be swung over using tree creepers.

CRITICISM

● "I like the way that Tarzan is presented — the side view is an excellent idea and gives the

game a whole new perspective. The sound is practically non-existent, bar a few spot effects, which don't enhance the game at all — this didn't help the atmosphere of the game very much and I didn't feel that it involved the player much at all. Tarzan is very slightly based on the film, but basically very like Tir Na Nog — and not too exciting at all. MARTECH have come up with a good game, but I'm afraid I've seen it all before."

● "On the whole it isn't a bad game, trudging around the seemingly endless jungle (probably in circles) gets a little tiresome after

more than half an hour, but if you manage to get some interesting objects you can become absorbed in the game. My only real moan is that the screens take a while to generate, which can really spoil the flow of the game. The graphics are very good, the backgrounds are exceedingly pretty and the characters are well defined. On the whole this isn't really much of a variation on arcade adventures so I wouldn't buy it unless I was a aardvark freak."

● "Gosh, thought I as I loaded up this one, what pretty graphics. Well, I didn't actually think that, but it sounds good. The graphics aren't actually all that good, because the effective border around the screen not only serves as an excuse not to use the whole display area, but also masks some rather poor quality sprites. I think this game isn't very playable; this is probably because all the game has to it is wandering through the same ol' screens again and again. No. I don't like it."

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable

Joystick:

Keyboard play: pretty neat

Use of colour: monochromatic

Graphics: detailed and effective

Sound: some spot effects when played on the Spectrum Plus 2

Skill levels: one

Screens: 300

General rating: just another aardvark in the software jungle

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	79%
Playability	67%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	72%
Value for money	72%
Overall	73%

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DEEP STRIKE

Producer: Durell
Retail Price: £9.95
Author: Nick Wilson

O.K. you chaps, we're going to jump in the old string bags and go in there and give the old hun a real pasting. This is what you chaps have to do. Five bombers, escorted by one fighter, will make a bombing run deep into the Hun's rear. The target is a fuel dump. Destroy this and the whole course of the war could be changed. I know you're the chaps for the job and you'll do a fine job.

Now we must expect the Hun to throw everything he's got at us. At first, there'll be just a few Hun patrols. But watch out for the black suicide 'planes, they'll try to crash straight in to the bomber. Most of the time, the fighters will attack the bombers, so it's your fighter's job to try to protect them by shooting the Hun down. But watch the jolly old compass. If you stray too far from the straight and narrow, you'll encounter very heavy enemy archie. Even worse, you could run out of juice before reaching your target.

After the first section, you come to the hills. These have to be steered around or over. After the hills, the squadron flies over enemy lines. It's time to start bombing things. And try not to shoot up your own bombs. Next

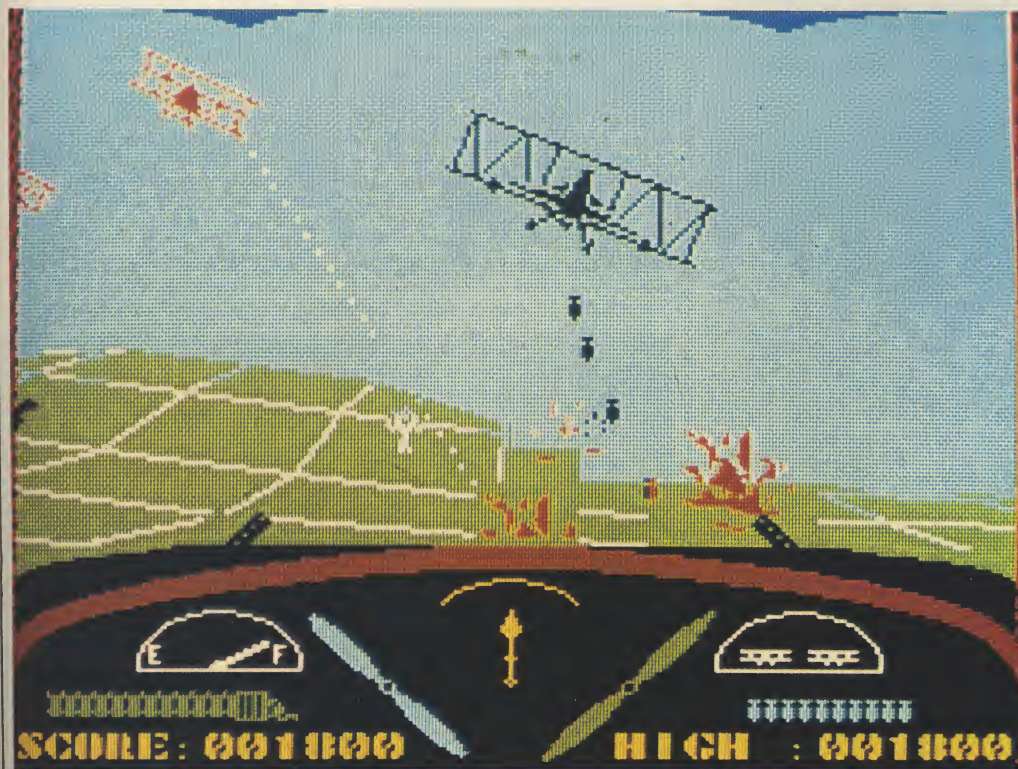
section has our brave lads dodging through barrage balloons. These can be shot (but watch out for the flaming debris) but are better avoided.

There are a few points to be had from shooting down planes, but most points come from bombing ground targets. Although you are controlling the fighter, you indirectly control the bomber which tries to keep directly ahead of you. So bombing is a question of reacting quickly as the target comes over the horizon, letting go a stream of bombs, and 'steering' the bombs on to target. As you bank, the whole scenery on screen tilts. The ground has contours *Combat Lynx* style.

The panel at the bottom of the screen shows the amount of machine gun ammo and bombs remaining. There are two damage indicators, in the form of propellers which get progressively eaten away. One shows the damage to the bomber, the other the damage the fighter has sustained. There are five bombers at the start, and as one gets shot down, another takes its place in front of the fighter.

There is a map, which shows how far through the game you have progressed. If you finally make it to the fuel dump and blow it up, you'll land, refuel, and then go on another mission.

What ho, our chaps unleash a few cabbage crates on the old hun. But watch out for the Hun ace, he's attacking the fighter!



One bomber down and a few problems as two more fiendish hun hove into view

CRITICISM

● "Whenever a new DURELL game turns up at CRASH towers, it's usually a red letter day. But this just isn't up to the company's own high standards. This isn't to say it's no good, it's just not epoch making. The graphics move smoothly and it's jolly colourful. The contour effect is brilliant, but only plays a small part in the game. But I feel it is too involved for a blast-em-up, and not complex enough for an arcade/strategy game. The keys are also quite a handful. Trying to bomb things, weave about the sky and keep blazing away at the enemy 'planes is really tough. Even the 'easy' level is really tricky. A tenner is quite a lot for this modest little shoot-em-up."

● "Deep Strike is a strange mixture between a flight simulator and

a decent shoot'em up, unfortunately it doesn't really excel in either of these areas — it is too simple for a flight simulator and the movement is too slow for good shoot em up. The graphics are very well designed and gives an excellent impression of a solid 3D landscape. The control of your plane is too unresponsive for a good 'ole blast. It also seems a pity that the plane that you control is the middle one in the squadron as the plane in front of you often ends up dying because you shoot it accidentally. Deep Strike is a fairly average game from DURELL, that should go down well with most people."

● "After the tremendous tremendousness of *Fat Worm*, my opinion of DURELL rocketed. This one, though, brought it into more moderation. It's not bad, but I think that it lacks content. Basically, I think it's a shoot 'em up, where more of a simulation would have gone down better. The graphics are very pretty, and the colour is splashed about fairly elaborately, but I'm sure a little more content wouldn't have gone amiss. Not bad, overall, but could have been better."

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable: up, down, left, right, bomb, map, abort
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2

Keyboard play: sluggish

Use of colour: attractive

Graphics: good perspective effect

Sound: good tune, reasonable effects

Skill levels: three

Screens: large scrolling landscape

General rating: neither arcade nor simulator

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	82%
Playability	76%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	79%
Value for money	73%
Overall	79%

INSIDE LM TOWERS

Strapped to the back of your Christmas CRASH is the first ever issue of Newsfield's newest magazine, LM. LLOYD MANGRAM has a look at his fellow conspirators and gives some inside info, PAUL STRANGE looks ahead to Issue One, and SIMON POULTER talks to the man behind it all, Roger Kean.

BUT CAN THEY TYPE?

So there they were, gathered round the conference table at LM's London HQ for the first-ever editorial chinwag. Issue Zero was in the inky hands of our printers in darkest Cumbria, and the LM team were desperately trying to think of things for Issue One.

But who are the members of the LM team? Some are familiar, many are new faces. At the top, in the hierarchical sense, are the three publishers. **Franco Frey** is the moneybags, has occasionally contributed to CRASH as technospert, knows how Apricots work and how to get them to talk to humans. Likes: Lauren Bacall, designing houses and fast, large American cars. Hates: dirt, unpunctuality and central heating installers. Being Swiss, he calls gravy 'sauce'.

Oliver Frey is LM's Art Editor, and is, of course, known for all those marvellous covers and illustrations that get people talking. Hobbies: old black and white Fred Astair movies, comics and champagne. Hates: airbrushes, cleaning brushes and tidy desks. He's never heard of gravy.

Roger Kean is the man who's done it all, so he's just wonderful, and he signs my expenses sheets. He's interviewed by Simon Poulter elsewhere on these pages, so no more on our Editor except to say that he makes fabulous gravy.

Then there's myself, **Lloyd Mangram**, general dogsbody and person voted Most Sensible Man Of The Year by ex-Sinclair User staff. Hobbies: bicycling, gardening, taking photographs and writing letters. Hates: crowds, traffic and being photographed. What more can I say? Well I could always introduce the rest of the team — the ones who do the real work round here...

PAUL STRANGE (Deputy Editor)

Strange by name, weird by nature. Paulie, Groucho or Slim, call him what you like, never tires of telling us where he's coming from and what's going down. It's not just tummy that LM's Dep Ed has tucked under his belt; he's got bags and bags of experience. An unlikely outdoor type, Uncle Paul worked on *The Field* and *Farmers Weekly* before trading in his gumboots and shooting stick for a healthy dose of Sex and Flares and Rock'n'Roll on *Melody Maker*. Hobbies: collecting curries, flooding his kitchen, Soho cinemas, gravy, Her Downstairs, reversing into concrete pillars. Hates: mornings, small children, men who wear make-up, untidy flats.

DAVID CHEAL (London Editor)

Our man with an earring, a soft voice, a clapped-out Renault 5 and never more than a couple of quid in his pocket was

on *SHE* before sliding off to join LM. A professional writer of some standing, The Rum DC delights in thinking up outrageous puns for headlines; his masterpiece was IF YOU KNEW SUSHI, for a piece on Japanese cuisine. David prides himself on having LM's best-kept coiffure (not that there's competition), and spends hours in the Advance Works bogs with his compact mirror, styling mousse, moisturiser, and a copy of *New Socialist*. This guy's so coooool. Hobbies: quiche and salad with a glass of white wine, Dorothy's cosmetics, chocolate brownies, a roll-up last thing at night. Hates: gravy, spending money.

CURTIS HUTCHINSON (Features Editor)

Ludlow's answer to Barry Bucknell! The One They Call Hutchinson was raised by wolves in the wilds of Emsworth, Hampshire, and had a serious feeler-gauge habit by age 25. LM discovered Curtis demurely gobbling a chip butty in the offices of *Films & Filming*, where he was Deputy Editor; we whisked him off to Ludlow in an unmarked Mini, and a star was born. Hobbies: gravy, TV-AM, monkey wrenches, getting married. Hates: chip butties, Top Gun haircuts, phone bills, waiting for the AA, Paul Strange in the morning.

BARNABY PAGE (Sub-Editor)

Is this man pedantic or what? He's the only person in Ludlow who knows the difference between an aardvark and an ant bear (technically there isn't any, which may be how he knows). A refugee from the salt mines of *Newsweek*'s arts section, Barney likes a quiet night in, cuddling up with his Collins and learning a few thousand words. Hobbies: hyperbolising, *gnocchi*, gravy, surreptitious snouts, being clever-clever. Hates: bad language, bouillabaisse.

SUE DANDO (Staff Writer)

This well-dressed man-eater spent her formative years on *Oh Boy!* before moving to *My Guy* where she studied the male form and all its foibles in stomach-churning detail. Her conclusions weren't all that favourable, so certain male members on the LM team look extremely dicky. We expect some provocative copy out of her investigations. Hobbies: vox pops, cricket, exotic earrings, getting blotto for as little dosh as possible. Hates: designer stubble, LM bureaucracy. Takes a minimalist approach to gravy.

RICHARD LOWE (Staff Writer)

Richard is what street cred is all about. Don't be fooled by the bleached-blond hair, he really does walk, talk and look like Paul Weller. And beneath that hard streetwise exterior and Macc Lad

bravado lies the heart of a big pussycat. Before joining LM, Mr Lowe was one of the hip young upstarts on *The Hit*. Ricky-boy, as he is never known, is the only LM staffer who can seriously challenge Sally Newman in under-the-table drinking. Known to his colleagues as a 'miserable Scouse git'. Hobbies: Beer and Sex and Chips and Gravy. Favourite phrase: 'All right Pete y'bastard!'. Hates: wind-ups.

SIMON POULTER (Staff Writer)

This guy's the biz, makes a mean cup of coffee and pisses everyone off with his Adrian Edmondson impersonations. And our Man In A Suitcase also has an annoying habit of playing Genesis tapes in broad daylight, sad in one so young. LM discovered Simon while he was mopping up bubble bath in Boots; he claimed he had been bitten by the writing bug (just below the knee), we liked the cut of his jib and so we shanghaied him up to Ludlow. Hobbies: Garfield, gravy, Top Gun haircuts, designer stubble, gravy, Garfield, collecting Boots memorabilia, gravy, poncing freebies, Garfield. Hates: carrying his suitcase, being asked his age in the pub.

SALLY NEWMAN (Editorial Assistant)

Once a mild, unassuming shorthand teacher, Sally is now known as The Dragon of Grovel Hill. A single cutting glance from Our Sal can be more frightening than a full-blown Paul Strange Monday moodie. Sally came to LM via Newsfield's computer titles in faraway King Street and has quickly established herself as our hi-tech wizard. Telephones hold no terror for Sally; Apricots, Joyces, Frankies, facsimile machines, modems, anglepoise lights and four-gang sockets are our friends, she says. We couldn't work without her. Sally is also an actress, widely acclaimed as the Bo Derek of

south Shropshire. Hobbies: celery, rubber-band fights, rib-tickling, staring at pictures of William Shatner, eight pints of Hook Norton. Hates: tidy flats, untidy offices, TV repairmen, gravy, Paul Strange Monday moodies.

MARY MORRIS (Editorial Assistant)

The larger-than-life hair is only the start of it; this is one enigmatic lady, ruled by her secret passions for fast Fifties cars and Mickey Rourke. Watch out for The Woman In Black if you happen to be sunning yourself in Greece next summer — Mary goes *au naturel*. Hobbies: veggie food, good clean living. Hates: being recognised on Greek beaches, and meat-based gravies.

FRAN MABLE

(Editorial Assistant)

Fran was a simple country girl, spending her days riding her horse, mailing binders, and preparing to settle down to marital bliss. Then she discovered LM... Hobbies: telephone repairmen, photocopy repairmen, central heating installers, breaking telephones. Hates: filing, mailing binders, making gravy, filing and filing.

GORDON DRUCE (Assistant Art Editor)

Gordon has worked on the computer mags since — since a long time, wielding scalpel, ruler and rapidograph with equal dexterity. He's almost as quiet as David Cheal, but spends less time over his hair (not much less). Hobbies: uncovering unlikely bands and playing their music to everyone in the art department, fast open-top British sports cars and gravy sandwichwiches. Hates: obvious groups.

BEEZER (Photographer)

Beezer comes from Bristol. He moved to London during the summer to seek his fortune and ended up living in a shoebox in Ladbroke Grove. He's now found more spacious accommodation in Battersea, where he pays the Rachmanite rent of £1.25 per week (inc). Beezer is 21 and has taken photographs for Bristol's listings magazine *Venue*, *NME*, and *Echoes*. Hobbies: meeting people, drinking scrumpy, submitting invoices written on scraps of toilet-paper in yellow wax crayon. Hates: meeting landladies, landladies' gravy, the Institute Of Chartered Accountants.

That's the LM Team.

A multitude of covers coming off the printing line. 269,000 copies were printed.





ROGER WILCO

ROGER KEAN stares suspiciously at the Walkman in front of him. It's probably the first (and only) time he's been interviewed by one of his own employees, but it doesn't deter him for long; Newsfield's editorial mastermind is seldom stumped for words.

The man who created CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX! decided to launch a new youth title after observing the masses of mail flooding in at CRASH Towers.

'The letters seemed to be fighting to get away from computers and to talk about other things,' he says. 'We thought it would be interesting to have a Newsfield magazine similar in style but dealing with a much wider range of subjects. The concept was simple — CRASH, but not about computers. Obviously it's grown a bit since then.'

'We felt there was a hole in the market for something with a wider base than pop music or soap operas. It's a bit of a challenge — few magazines have succeeded in this area. The gamble is that the style and fanaticism that has been generated with Newsfield's titles will carry on.'

'At first the name was a joke. Lloyd Mangram had been answering the letters on CRASH and ZZAP!, so L.M. became a working title — Lloyd Mangram's Leisure Monthly. It stuck — much to Lloyd's hor-

ror.'

What age group is L.M. aimed at? 'Principally 17 upwards, but we are still aiming to write the magazine in the same style as the computer magazines. I'm hoping that L.M. will appeal to younger readers as well as older. And if we write for young adults too, some of the more tendentious issues will become easier to cope with.'

Where will L.M. be placed on the newsstands?

'Away from the music papers, otherwise it's labelled as a music paper. It has to sit with the lifestyle magazines like *The Face* or *i-D*, though it's nothing like them either in look, flavour or content. I think it's the only place it can go.'

Is it a young man's version of *Woman* or *SHE*?

'A horrible thought! It probably is in a way, but L.M. will be of much more general interest than the women's magazines.'

No plans for knitting patterns, then?

'No, but we might do a gardening column!'

What about reader involvement?

'It's very important and one of the biggest selling aspects of any magazine. Readers have good ideas and I hope that L.M. readers will respond as they've done on the computer magazines. I hope that L.M. will have even more letters, and aggressive ones at that.'

Write on, Rog.

The L.M. team gathered in fabulous Islington last month to practise smiling. **Back row**, left to right: Gordon Druce, Mary Morris, Sue Dando, David Cheal, Simon Poulter, Barnaby Page. **Front row**: Roger Kean, Paul Strange, Richard Lowe, Curtis Hutchinson. Oliver Frey was back in Ludlow slaving over a hot palette, Lloyd Mangram missed the train, Sally Newman and Fran Mable were still in the pub and Beezer was behind the camera.



At 30,000 copies per hour, pages of L.M. Issue Zero flash past the Hutchinson camera at our printer.



Pierce Brosnan gets touched up for a scene in **THE FOURTH PROTOCOL** — report coming next month.

Other things we've got lined up are a round-up of the blossoming cheapie video labels, a Richard Lowe rant about stupid sports, a picture feature on an inspired 21-year-old Croydonian photographer called Martin Eidemak, a run-down of the fashions that are going to hit the high-street stores in the spring, a guide to jumble-sale bargain-spotting, interviews with Paul McGann (star of TV's *The Monocled Mutineer* and Pierce Brosnan (star of the soon-to-be-released *Fourth Protocol* movie), reviews of what's new on the turntable, the screen, the video and the bookshelf, AND all our regular columns (Lloyd's Word Up, Minson's

Mondo Bizarro, Hassles, Prize Crossword, Station To Station and the Consumer Guide).

All this and pop interviews too? Yeah, we've got 'em à-gogo: Icicle Works in Liverpool, The Human League in Norwich and a few others that we've had to swear to keep secret.

So now you know. L.M. Issue One hits the bookstands on 15 January and it's going to be an imperative purchase. See you then.

GIVE US A STRANGE LOOK

the first L.M. editorial meeting has already passed into the history books as an earthshattering event ranking with The Battle Of Britain, The Charge Of The Light Brigade and Pearl Harbour.

It was a truly shocking and debauched affair, and among other things it gave us a chance to discuss where we're at, where we're going, what's going down, what's going up and where we're coming from (man).

Naturally, we couldn't all be present at L.M.'s palatial offices in Islington — Lloyd and Oli missed the train (feeble excuse no 546), while Sally and Fran were nailed to The Bull bar in Ludlow the night before (disgraceful).

But for those of us who could make it, the first editorial meeting was unforgettable. And being the decent chaps that we are, we thought we'd let you in on some highly secret projects that we discussed

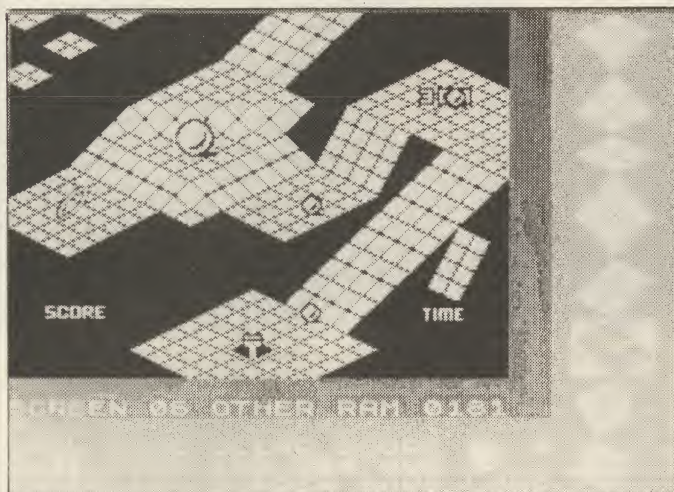
on the day.

Like, what's going to be in L.M.'s first on-sale issue out on 15 January?

Well, to start with we're going to open up our regular extended feature slot called Man In A Suitcase. Each month L.M.'s intrepid reporter Simon Poulter will don his porkpie hat, slip on his shades and head for a national hotbed of sin (he hopes). Simon will be staying in a city for a week and bringing back an in-depth report of what he's been up to, who he's met, what bands are emerging, what haircuts are in, what are the best shops, what are the best nightclubs, what sports facilities there are, what the local radio station is up to and what's happening on the street.

For Issue One Simon hits Birmingham, and for future L.M.s he's off to Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich and all points north. Well crucial.

MARBLE MADNESS CONSTRUCTION SET



The icon driven construction screen; Cameron obviously has a sick sense of humour

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail Price: £8.95

Following the recent spate of *Marble Madness* clones, along comes the grand master himself in the form of a construction set from **MELBOURNE HOUSE**. Once more the hero of the game is Mr Spherical, a ball, who takes to the slippery slopes of the crooked palace of power. The game is split into two parts; firstly the game... Life as a marble can't be an easy one; especially when you're trapped in a strange world of unreality, where the laws of



physics that you once held true no longer apply. So, to pass the time Mr Spherical enters himself for the local races. The aim of these is a simple one - to reach the end of each level before your time runs out.

With four directions at your disposal, you must keep Mr Spherical under control as he winds his weary way to the bottom of the

racetrack. Racing over the flat planes isn't so bad, but the narrow ramps and bridges can prove extremely hazardous - one small roll out of place, and with a resounding scream poor old Mr Spherical plunges to his death in the murky swamplands which surround the track. Many creatures inhabit the swamplands, and some of these occasionally force themselves up onto the racetrack - in search of any slow-witted contestants who may fall prey to the difficult corners. The most notorious of the lot are the evil marbles who roll carelessly along the plains, they also bring with them their spongy mates who move in a slinky fashion on the surface of the slopes. Contact with these, and any other of the various nasties leads to obliteration as well as a loss of time.

If you become fed up with the preset patterns of the racetrack, there is an option on the title screen which allows you to construct your own. The construction process is controlled by the four standard direction keys plus a fire key. Running down the right hand side of the construction screen is a selection of the various planes that can be used to make up your revised track. They include two angular planes, one flat, one vertical, a left and right slant and two steep slants. Along the bottom of the screen is a text option window. Using this, you can place oddments on the screen such as time displays, points scored, and marks of 100, 300 and 500. These can be put anywhere your heart desires. All of these options are accessed by moving your arrow cursor onto the one you want and pressing fire. Doing this allows you

to move the item around the screen until you find a place to plonk it down. Once you have successfully completed the construction of a screen, select Test and a marble appears at the top - now it's time to see if your Great Design has worked, or like all the other Great Designs has it disappeared down the plughole...

CRITICISM

● "I must confess that after a little while I was quite getting into designing my own screens but when it came to actually playing them the game began to annoy me. Graphically this is run-of-the-mill for this type of game, your ball skids around the playing area fairly smoothly, the backgrounds are detailed and there are no attribute problems anywhere in the game. The sound is very good, a tune plays continuously on the title screen and throughout the game. On the whole if you are a fan of this type of game then perhaps this will appeal to you."

● "Marble Madness looks far too much like the old Gyroscopic to be much of a success. I'm not really too keen on this type of game anyway, but this one is just bad news. The graphics are poor, and though the movement of the marble is fairly smooth, the whole thing is just a mite too unplayable."

● "I didn't really like the arcade machine that much, so I was a bit cautious when it came to reviewing the computer version. To be honest, *Marble Madness* is very

badly written. The graphics are of the monochromatic kind, and with these you can't go far wrong, although the way they are manipulated is very slow and jerky. It took an amazingly long time to actually move the ball from one side of the screen to the other - but once done, it takes ages to flick to the next screen. Apart from being unplayable I also found it very inaccurate - constantly I found myself disappearing down holes that weren't there, and rebounding off invisible walls. This is a very bad game, and considering it's from the people that brought us *Gyroscope* it is even worse."

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable, up, down, left, right, fire

Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2

Keyboard play: like nailing jelly to the ceiling

Use of colour: monochromatic play area

Graphics: detailed, with good animation

Sound: excellent rendition of the arcade tune

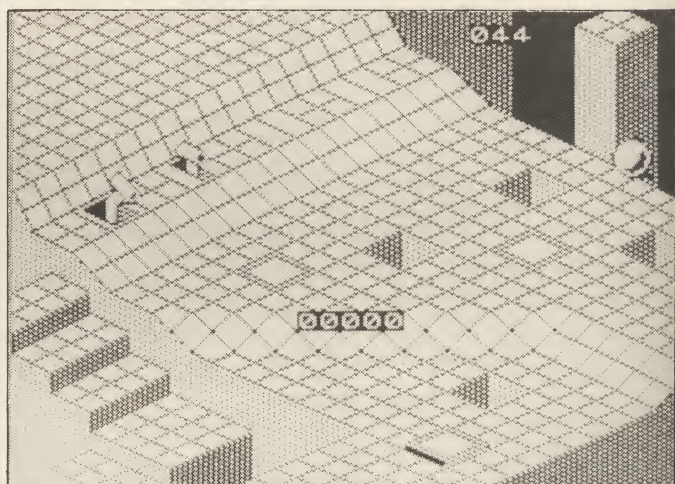
Skill levels: one

Screens: 11

General rating: a good idea poorly executed

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	71%
Playability	54%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	61%
Overall	61%

The game in action, it looks like Cameron's about to take a tumble



KAT TRAP

Producer: Domark

Retail Price: £8.95

Author: Design Design

Way back in the June issue of CRASH a rather unusual competition was launched. The task: to design a game for the Spectrum. The prize: world fame and fortune in the software industry. Well, you never know! The winner of this prestigious competition was Jonathan Eggleton, selected from acres of entries for his design - *Kat Trap*. Programmed by DESIGN DESIGN and marketed by DOMARK the game is now in a finished state and ready for review.

Time has moved on a bit and we're now in the 24th century, and Earth does look in a sorry state. Pounded by solar explosions and abandoned by the Earthlings, the Earth has now become home for a strange and dangerous breed of creatures called Kat Men. Now that the solar explosions have died down, the Earth people are thinking about moving back into their homeland. However, the Kat Men aren't going to give up their new found home without a fight. In enforced exile, the Earth people plot to rid their home of the evils of the Kat Men for good, and to get the planet back into the bargain. Being a largely unimaginative lot they send down a Multi Terrain Exploration Droid known to his mechanical chums as M.T-ED. This cute little robot is more used to travelling over rough terrain than to fighting it out to the death with hordes of strange and nasty aliens. Accompanied by Hercules 1, a maintenance and combat droid, M.T-ED is beamed down and the dynamic duo begin their quest. Unfortunately things go horribly wrong as soon as their little tin feet touch the planet's soil, as Hercules

1 is kidnapped by the Kat Men and whisked away. Now with two tasks instead of one, M.T-ED has to blast his way through the ruined remains of this green and pleasant globe, and rescue his metal mate into the bargain.

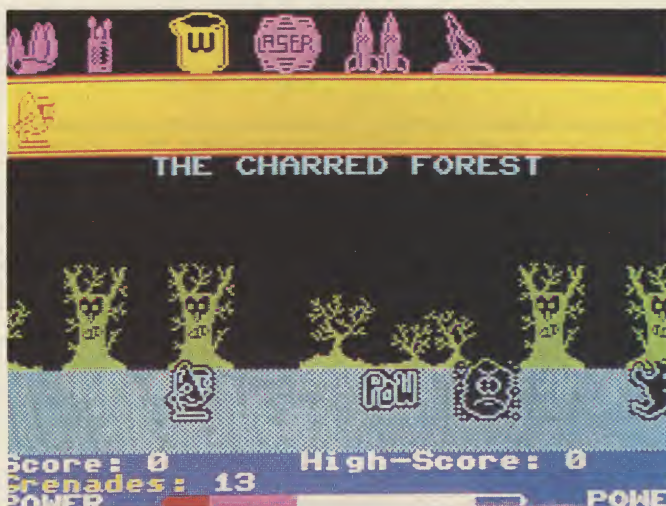
There are fourteen sections to M.T.'s task, each taking place in a different location on Earth. In each of these sections are many dangers which he must confront. He's a simple droid and not really cut



out for all this fighting, therefore he starts out with only a few basic weapons bolted on this frame. Luckily, other sorts of artillery can be picked up along the way by simply walking into them, these are then displayed at the top of the screen and can be selected when needed. Grenades, rockets, lasers and even water are all used to help M.T-ED in his mission.

The reason for this array of different weapons is simple. Not just the Kat Men have taken up residence on earth. Ice Men, Fire Demons and Mekno Cats (who'll eat anything!) - to name but a few - have also moved in, and each type of nasty requires a certain type of weapon to defeat him.

The screen scrolls from left to right and our hero has to shoot the nasties and pick up useful objects before they get him first. If M.T-ED does get biffed by a nasty, he falls on his bonce and is stunned for a few seconds. When this happens he loses one of his droid lives. Not



The forest stage. M.T. blasts a meanie. He's got a full set of weapons, so it should be plain sailing from here

all of the nasties are lethal. For instance, in the Charred Forest the ghosts simply make life very awkward by stealing any weapons that are lying around. M.T-Ed must therefore be very quick off the mark in this situation.

M.T-Ed moves in a realistic mechanical way, and can jump over any monsters that he's too slow to shoot. Being a Multi-Terrain Droid he can cope quite well with some of the bizzare landscapes which he must encounter. Although the Alps, where he has to spring from one peak to another, might give him some serious trouble. M.T-Ed must struggle through each terrain until he reaches the Nerve Centre, where he has to rescue Hercules 1, but to get there he must even cross the bed of an underground lake and romp through a castle. Once Hercules 1 has been rescued there is another small game-ette to be completed before the end is in sight for M.T-ED.

On the bottom of the main screen is the score with the current high score for the player to aim for. Power is shown at the bottom of the screen, and when this reaches zero M.T-Ed loses one of his lives. At the top of the screen are his lives and the type of weapons he has collected.

● "The first couple of levels are fairly easy, but they do prove to be very frustrating, after these two the levels become a lot more challenging so the game as a whole proves to be very compelling. Graphically *Kat Trap* is slick, the characters are well animated and the backgrounds are colourful. The sound is a bit on the lame side, there are no tunes and the spot effects are minimal. I quite liked this as it plays well and it looks good, well worth a look."

● "We've seen plenty of preview versions of *Kat Trap*, so the finished version isn't anything unexpected. When playing the more complete versions, I didn't think much of it — it seemed very like an average sort of shoot em up. After giving the finished version a good half hour, though, I began to think I was hooked. Immediately, I wasn't hit by it, but perseverance certainly reaped its reward. I hope DESIGN DESIGN can get together with DOMARK again and produce more of this sort of game. It might well do them both a lot of good!"

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable, up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: speedy
Use of colour: adequate
Graphics: detailed and amusing
Sound: the odd spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 196
General rating: a humorous little shoot-em-up

CRITICISM

● "*Kat Trap* is a fast furious game that is more than just a trek around a few bits of scenery. You really have to look at each nasty before you blow his head off, or you could choose the wrong weapon and get thrown around yourself. The graphics are well designed but don't seem to be solid enough to look real. Sound is a bit basic, but the spot effects serve their purpose. I wouldn't mind if someone put this in my Christmas stocking (wink wink, nudge nudge, 'nuff said Santa)."

Use of computer	81%
Graphics	82%
Playability	86%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	86%
Value for money	83%
Overall	84%

In the ruined city Jon Eggleton's hero faces two hazards — the balls are irritating, but the meanies on the right are fatal!



TERMINUS

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: £2.99
Author: P Hargreaves

The Wanglers are very anti-school. In fact they're so against the system that they are campaigning for less lessons and more free time. However, the Emperor takes a very dim view of this, and has taken serious steps to cut down on this type of insubordination by arresting Brains, the Wangler's leader. Poor old Brains has been locked up in Terminus, the most impregnable prison in the galaxy.

Brains' colleagues decide that he must be rescued from the prison so that their quest can continue. They set out for the prison in order to help their friend.

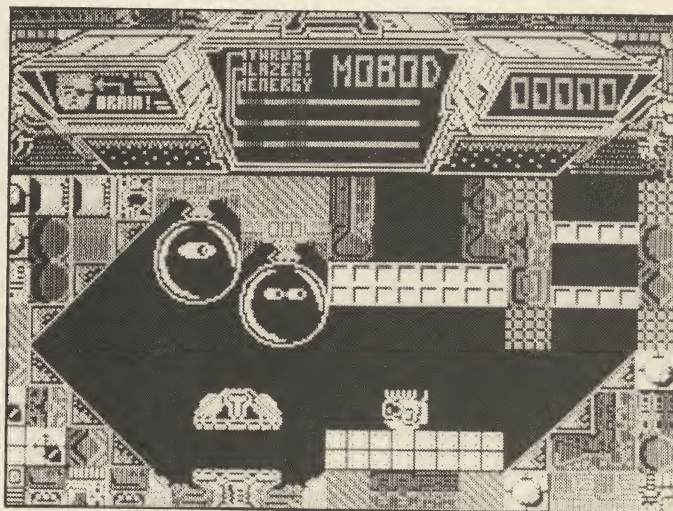
There are four friends altogether and each one has his own special talent which he can put to good use in attempting to release their leader. Each of them has a protective suit which shields them from the force-fields and other perils which await them. However, these only work if their batteries are fully charged. The energy level for each character's suit is shown at the top of the main screen. The control panel also shows how much thrust energy and lasers they have left. When any of these levels reach zero, then that particular character

perishes, and the others have to carry on without him.

Mobod and Xann move by flying. However, once their thrust energy drops off, they have to find somewhere to recharge before they can become airborne again. Magno is a cat burglar, although he doesn't look like one. His main talent is being able to stick to ceilings in order to avoid traps. Spex does possess legs, but he prefers to bounce everywhere for some odd reason. You can only control one of these characters at a time, but they can be called in to action at any time as long as you're on a teleport pad.

CRITICISM

● "The game is very similar to *Tantulus* but it isn't really as playable or as addictive, as it takes a long time to get into. Graphically I can see a lot of people really hating this as there is almost too much colour, I like it as there isn't any colour clash and there is a lot of detail. The sound is a bit on the lame side, no tunes and only a few spot effects. I think that this will only really appeal to *Tantulus* fans as it doesn't really offer much to the arcade player."



The transformer on the left will allow you to change between characters

● "Terminus contains nothing much more than *Tantulus* did. The game is immediately attractive. As with *Tantulus*, the screen is jam packed with pixels, all them full of colour a detail. But the game itself doesn't have much substance. The idea of controlling different characters is nothing new in arcade adventures, but, seems to work well and is one of Terminus's good points. Terminus features some nice touches; like the dissol-

ving walls and different bullets — but I didn't really like the game as a whole very much."

● "Golly! It's *Tantulus* with new sprites! I didn't like that program, and I don't like this. All the main characters have really awful control methods which makes the game frustrating from the very beginning. It's even more frustrating trying to work out where to go and there isn't much in the way of

SPEED KING 2

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: £2.99
Author: Derek Brewster

You are a contestant in a motorbike race. The action is viewed from behind your bike, the track scrolling towards the player gives the impression that the bikes are actually moving. At the start of the race, four lights count downwards and then you're off. The bike is capable of travelling at up to 192 mph, although it isn't such a good idea to do this when you're travelling around particularly tight bends. The speed at which you are travelling, which lap you're on and your position in the race are all shown at the top of the main screen, so that you can keep an accurate check on your progress.

The program includes a choice of track, each based on one of the world's famous racing circuits. The tracks involved are Donington, Silverstone, San Marino, Anderstorp, Paul Ricard, Jarama, Brands Hatch, Monza and Daytona. The track you want to race around can be selected from the menu options at the beginning of the game. The player can ride from as little as one track right up to nine, if he/she is feeling particularly

fit. There is a two player option so that you and a mate can compete against each other. In the two player option there are just two competitors, yourself and your opponent. In this case, the screen splits into two halves so that the view from each racer is shown.

If a player mis-judges a corner during the race, their bike comes off the track and slows right down to zero. The player loses valuable

time when this happens and has to get back on the road and re-accelerate to top speed. If the player hits another bike, then once again their speed drops off and more time is lost.

CRITICISM

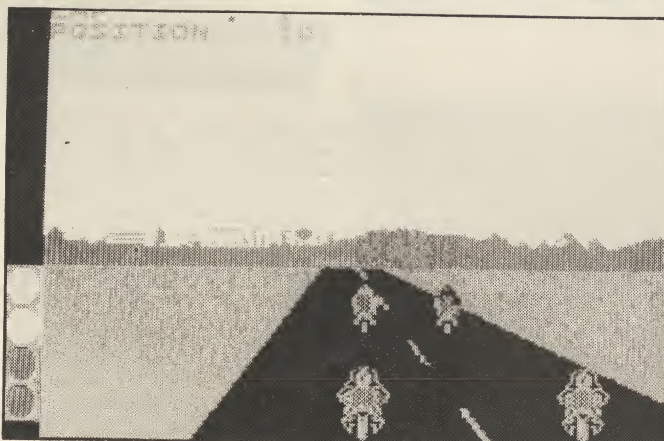
● "This is possibly the worst racing game that has come in this year, it has poor graphics that don't seem to speed up as you do (the white lines in the road go virtually the same speed

at 60mph as they do at 190mph) and the sound is no more than spot effects and growling. The game play is about as compulsive as a dead cat, if you don't come within the top ten in any lap on your first go then there is something wrong with you. The two player mode is its only redeeming feature. On the whole this may appeal to you are really into racing games but I'd keep well away from it."

● "This seems to be a very bad copy of *Full Throttle*, but with a two player game added. The two player game is a stupid affair, as there aren't any impartial bikers on the track and the first person to make a mistake usually loses. I felt that the game didn't really inform you enough of the things happening to your bike; for instance when in the two player game you don't know whose skidding as the noise for each person is the same, and when you hit something you don't feel like you're slowing down, but the speed counter decreases. I'm afraid *Speed King II* doesn't have the feel of a good bike game, and with *Full Throttle* at 2.99 it's got some good competition."

● "The graphics are incredibly bad, and the game is an awful attempt of a *Full Throttle* copy. The only thing that it has over *Full Throttle* is the fact that the characters don't flicker, and if that's two

Right at the start, can you fight your way from the back of the field



clues to help. The graphics are nice, but rather superficial and they don't really interact with the game in any way. If you liked *Tan-talus* I suppose you'd like this, but personally I prefer more arcade action and more adventure in my arcade adventures."

COMMENTS

Control keys: different for each character. Mobod and Xann: Q fly up, M laser fire, O left, P right. Magno: Q fly up, M laser fire, O left, P right, A detach. Spex: Q increase bounce, A decrease bounce, O left, P right, M fire

Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair

Keyboard play: responsive

Use of colour: a riot of colour

Graphics: detailed

Sound: a few spot effects

Skill levels: one

Screens: 512

General rating: unoriginal and confusing

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	76%
Playability	53%
Getting started	56%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	52%
Overall	52%

years of improvement, I'd rather keep the original. The impression of movement that was quite well put onto *Full Throttle* is totally non-existent on this one, apart from the little stripes down the middle of the road. I think *ELITE* can rest assured that there is no competition from this whatsoever, because it's dire."

COMMENTS

Control keys: Player One: Q lean left, W lean right, A accelerate, D decelerate. Player Two: O lean left, P lean right, L accelerate, . Decelerate

Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2

Keyboard play: responsive

Use of colour: minimal

Graphics: dire

Sound: rather like a very excited mosquito

Skill levels: ten different tracks of varying difficulty

Screens: scrolling play area

General rating: there are plenty of better race games

Use of computer	48%
Graphics	45%
Playability	41%
Getting started	56%
Addictive qualities	36%
Value for money	50%
Overall	42%

KINGS KEEP

Producer: Firebird Silver Range

Retail Price: £1.99

Author: Ian Wright

Harold is a very nasty King. He rules his kingdom by bullying the inhabitants and locking up their cabbage patch dolls if they're naughty. However, King Harold has a son who is a little more broadminded than his dad. Harold's son objects strongly to the way that his dad rules the country. But King Harold knows that his son has sympathies with

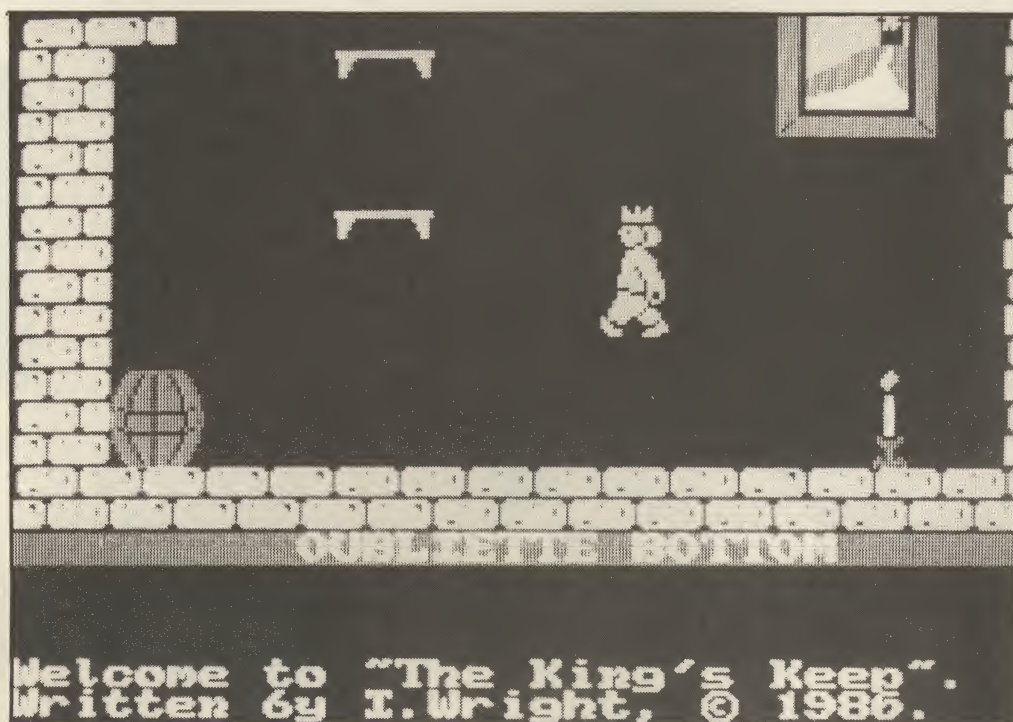
Harold Junior moves around the castle on foot, but he does have quite springy legs which is just as well really, because some rooms can only be entered and exited by way of platforms and large jumps.

CRITICISM

● "Kings Keep is yet another trite arcade adventure. To be fair this has some nice features like the messages under the playing

to get into; but basically the game is another boring adventure that doesn't excite any of my feelings, and the result is a very dead end game. Only for the dedicated arcade adventurer, with a small budget."

● "This is the sort of thing that gives budget a bad name. Back in the days when full price meant a program and budget meant a few hours doodling with a game designer this would have been acceptable, but these days it belongs in the waste bin. There is nothing original in this game at all. Just think what you could do with two quid instead. Hire a video, buy a paperback, just about anything, just don't buy this"



the locals and won't let him out of the castle in case he tries to start a rebellion. So Harold's son will remain a prisoner for ever and ever unless you can help him to escape from his father's evil clutches.

Harold Junior really wants to escape from his father's tyrannical rule, but first he has to find a way out of the castle. Old Kingy has been very sly and has blocked up some doors and made moving around the castle very difficult. Luckily Harold junior is a smart lad, and by using everyday objects which he comes across on his travels, he can attempt an escape.

When the imprisoned prince enters a new room in the castle, the location scrolls across the bottom of the screen. In the same way conversations can be carried out with the various characters who live in the castle. These characters often give Harold's son hints and tips regarding which objects are useful to collect. There are options to give objects, examine them fully and use them. The conversation with the characters can be carried out by selecting the TALK option.

Welcome to Kings Keep, and you're welcome to it

window but all in all I couldn't really play this for more than ten minutes without losing what's left of my sanity. The graphics are pretty much run-of-the-mill for this type of game, lots of colour but not much detail. The sound is also a bit limp, no tunes and very few effects. As always the instructions given were a little lacking in content so it could take a while for you to learn the ins and outs of the game."

● "A surprise!! FIREBIRD have come out with another budget arcade adventure. I'm sorry to say this, but, I really have got to hate this type of game. There seems to be very little programming thought involved in this type of game nowadays. The characters are fairly large but aren't detailed enough to look like real things. Colour is well used and clashes are almost non-existent. Kings Keep is very easy

COMMENTS

Control keys: jump Q; left O; right P, pick up 1; inventory 2; list commands 5

Joystick: Kempston

Keyboard play: strange at first, but quite straight-forward really

Use of colour: reasonable

Graphics: dull

Sound: unusual spot effects

Skill levels: one

Screens: budget tat

Use of computer	42%
Graphics	50%
Playability	58%
Getting started	50%
Addictive qualities	31%
Value for money	45%
Overall	42%

Konami®

SHAO-LIN'S ROAD™

'The arcade hit...
...in your home!'



Screen shots from
arcade version – home
micro versions may differ.

The smash hit follow up to
'Yie Ar Kung-Fu'

Spectrum
Commodore 64
and
Amstrad versions
coming soon.

Our hero has finally
mastered the secret
martial art "CHIN'S
SHAO-LIN" but is trapped
by triad gangs. With kicks
and other secret powers,
escape from and travel
SHAO-LIN'S road to
freedom!



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PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!

C-UCHI C-UCHI COO

Before any of you think 'just another martial arts game', and turn to the next page, there's no getting away from the fact that *Uchi Mata* from MARTECH looks pretty special.

Instead of simulating the ancient art of beating people up, this game is all about the subtle art of judo. Here brawn and speed aren't everything. A thorough knowledge of the moves, and using your 'weight' to throw your opponent are essential skills. Instead of just a single joystick move to accomplish an attack, a series of

joystick moves must come together to produce a winning manoeuvre. The first thing you must do is to try to get a good grip on your opponent. Once a grip has been obtained, a 'grip' light comes on, you must then attempt a throw. If this attempt fails, you'll have to start again with a new grip.

There is a diagram in the top right hand corner of the screen showing the position of each player's feet. This must be used to work out how a player's weight is distributed, and thus what might be the best move to use to throw

your opponent. Whenever an attack is made, it can be countered if a player is quick enough. If you get thrown, then again, fast reflexes are needed to ensure that you land on your feet. When a throw is made, a referee appears in place of the feet diagram and shows how many points have been scored. If a player manages to score ten points, the bout is over, otherwise the winner is the player who accumulates the most points during the bout.

The game features a great deal of animation as the contestants fly

A successful throw is executed by one of the contestants in a closely fought bout of Judo



SHOCKED AND STUNNED

You've had shoot-em-ups in space, you've had shoot-em-ups in cars, let's face it, you've blasted things in just about every conceivable environment. So *Cosmic Shock Absorber* makes no attempt to give any sort of reason. MARTECH figure that the computer junkie doesn't need a reason for blasting things, just give a guy a gun and something to fire at, and the chances are he'll get the message.

The hero of the game, Cosmic Shock Absorber in person, is a sort of fourth rate superhero. He's the sort of superhero who's not only dumb enough to put his pants outside his trousers, he'd even get them inside out in the process. Still, civilization as we know it is teetering on the brink, mankind as usual is looking around for somebody else to do the dirty work. Batman's taking a bath, Superman's busy shooting another film, Wonder Woman is staying in and washing her hair, so who is left to save the human race - Cosmic Shock Absorber, that's who.

So our fearless supernurd boldly goes out there to blast away at the

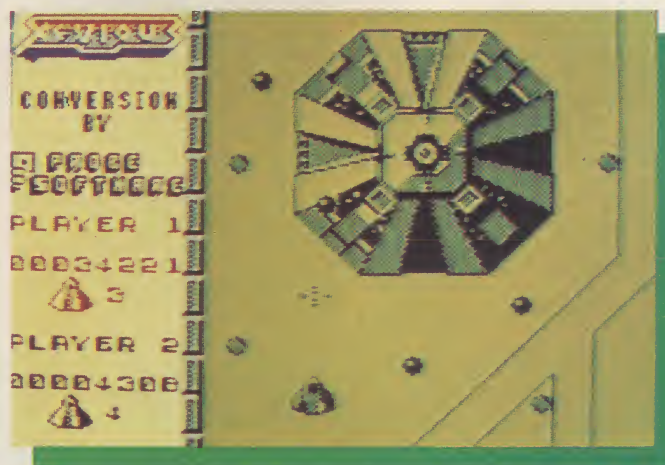
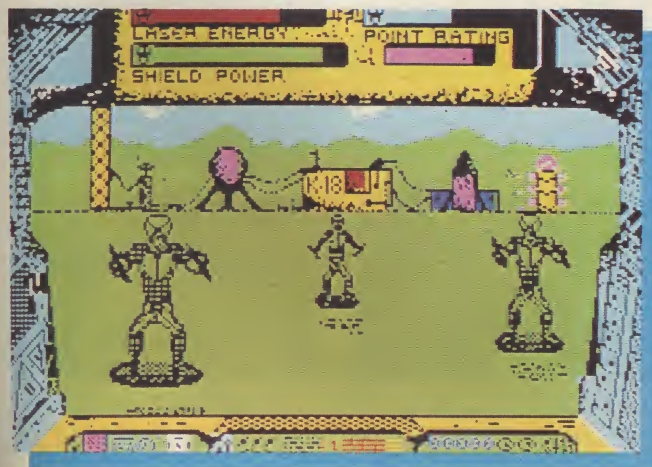
nasty aliens. Unfortunately, he's a bit skint, so all he can afford is a reconditioned hyper zapper gun. Trouble is, it keeps going wrong. It either conks out entirely or the controls reverse, or the ammunition falls out of the ammo clip.

With this amazing weapon he boldly goes forth to try to save the earth. The first stage has vultures dive bombing old Cosmic, and if he lets them get away, they'll blow up a power station. Then Cosmic faces the deadly threat. Carrots erupting from a desert no less! Unless he deals with them fast, the carrots will sprout legs and machine guns.

Last section is just a mega blast. Cosmic faces a hideous threat from the lake people. He's just got to blast away at absolutely anything.

For a mere £7.95, *Cosmic Shock Absorber* offers some pretty good blasting with lots of colour and action. Just the sort of thing to brighten up a long winter evening.

Cosmic faces up to the terrible threat of the floating alien nasties. Zap-em quick or they'll get that power station!



Our fearless fighter tackles a rather large alien ship. Where do you start?

DEVIOUS XEVIOUS

It looks like the Spectrum is going to be host to yet another arcade conversion, this time it's the cult classic *Xevious*. In case you don't already know, this is a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up which pits you against the evil forces of Xevious. These dastardly villains are trying to annihilate the population of Earth (whats new?).

Apparently the Xevious people inhabited the Earth eons ago, but they were forced to leave by the then oncoming ice age. Now they're back, and they're a little irate with the civilisation that has sprung up in their absence and taken over their planet.

You play the part of a Solvalu (super techno jet fighter) pilot.

You're the last in line of Earth's defences, and (you've guessed it) it's your job to protect the Earth from these invaders. You continuously fly north, bombing enemy installations and shooting all the vile 'n nasty Xevious fighters that get in your way.

Your final goal is the brain of the attacking Xevious forces; the Andor Genesis Mother Ship, this you must blow up with a direct hit to her nuclear reactor. Even this heroic act is not enough to stop the invasion however. Once you have destroyed the mothership the whole business starts all over again - but with a little more violence this time around!...

PREVIEW



THE ALIENS ARE COMING

After many months in preparation, *Aliens* is almost with us. This space adventure from **ELECTRIC DREAMS**, closely follows the plot of the smash-hit film.

Ripley, sole survivor of the first film, *Alien*, is picked up after floating round space in suspended animation for many years. When she finally reaches Earth, her story of the battle with the aliens isn't believed by the powers that be. While Ripley has been floating in space, a colony has been set up on the remote planet where she encountered the deadly beasts. A generator has been installed to turn the poisonous atmosphere into something more breathable. When all contact is lost with the base, Ripley agrees to head a team of crack marines to try and find out what has happened to the colonists.

The game has been designed by **Mark Eyles**, the man responsible for *Back to the Future*, and programmed by **SOFT MACHINE**. You play the part of Ripley, controlling not only her, but also the crack squad of space marines who have been sent in to clear up the mess. Ripley has to mastermind an attempt to retake the whole base from the marauding invaders.

This game requires a combination of tactical skill and powerful blasting. Ripley can see through the eyes of one marine at a time. They can either be given orders to proceed to a certain part of the complex, or they can actually be controlled as they battle against the savage monsters. The aliens move around the base, leaving their bio-mechanoid growths on

the walls. Unless these are blasted off, the room starts to spawn face huggers and alien eggs.

The base is a maze of corridors and rooms. The rooms are connected by doors which can be locked, opened, sealed, or blown down. Once an alien is found, it must be destroyed quickly before it attacks. A few shots to the body, or a really accurate shot to the head usually does this job.

Success is achieved by destroying all of the aliens, to do this, Ripley must get to the Queens Chamber which is at the opposite end of the base. If this is done, and the Queen is killed, it is just a question of mopping up the remaining aliens and then moving on to the next wave.

While all of this is going on, you must also defend vital areas of the base. The Armoury is vital to your cause, as each member of the crew must periodically return there to charge up their smart gun. The Control room keeps the lighting going, and the General room keeps the power and lighting going. The aliens can evade the marines by leaving the base and moving around the base on the planet's surface. Your squad can't follow them as the planet's atmosphere is poisonous.

The top of the screen is taken up with a view of the room currently occupied by the crew member under control. The bottom half of the screen indicates the status of the members of the party. If the status bar is green, they're O.K., if yellow, they're tired or captured. Red indicates an injured or impregnated crewman - black indicates

they're just plain dead.

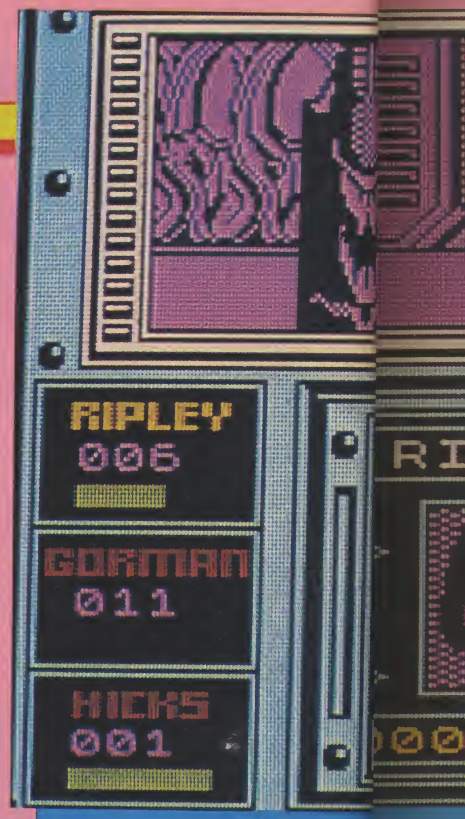
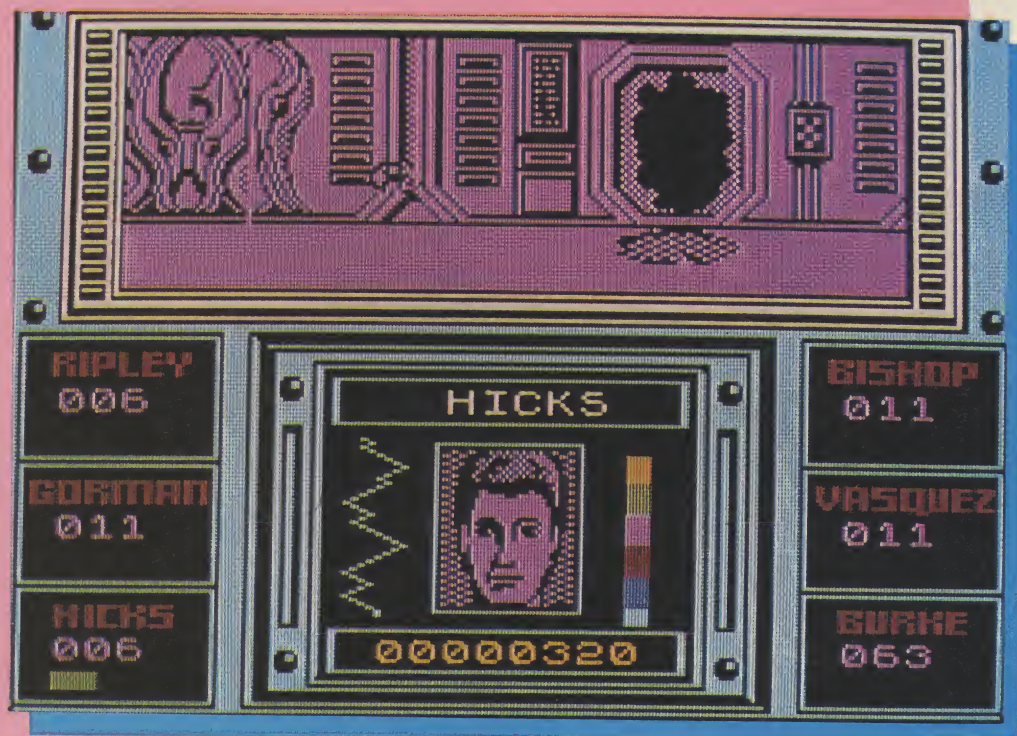
If the aliens capture a crewman, they impregnate him with an alien egg. That is unless you can free him by killing all of the aliens that surround him (or her of course - there's no sexism in the space marines!).

With over two hundred rooms, this game looks like being a tough combination of reflexes, planning and strategy.

ELECTRIC DREAMS plan to follow this up with *Big Trouble in Little China*. This is another film tie in, and the computer will feature three players which you control alternately. Wang Chi is a martial arts expert, so the player controls him when there's a bit of beating up to be done; Jack Burton is the All American Hero - with his 'Bushmaster' he cuts a swathe through the bad guys. When neither of these guys can cope, Egg Shen, the ancient magician steps forward and unleashes a mean spell or two.

The idea is, naturally, for this trio of butch brave people to rescue the helpless heroine from the evil clutches of the Mandarin Warlord. Fighting off Sewer Monsters, Wildmen, Warriors and Elementals. Our brave chums must delve deep into the meanies stronghold to rescue the heroine from the marriage chamber before she suffers a fate worse than death (and I don't mean going to a Smiths concert).

Signs of Alien activity, Hicks finds a door broken through, with acid blood on the floor, and the walls covered in bio mech

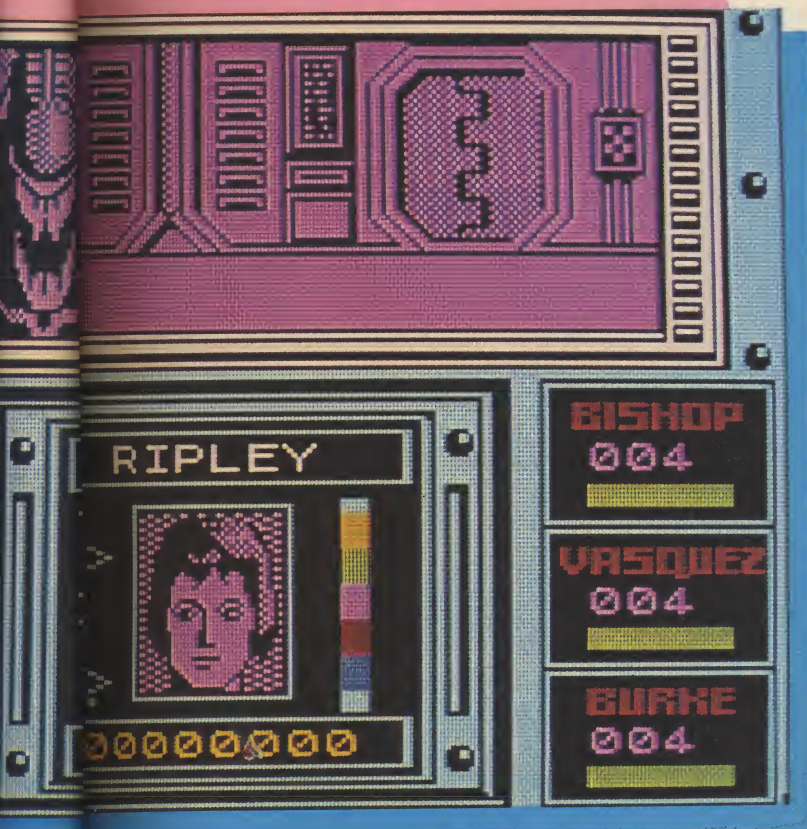


It looks like curtains for Ripley as one of the aliens moves in, jaws agape



COP THIS

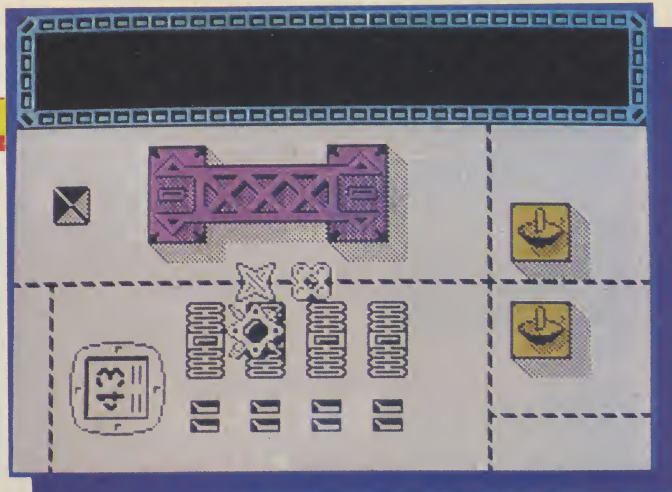
The latest release from those jolly people at **MIKROGEN** is *Cop Out*, this was the featured game in the play-off for **MIKROGEN's** National Computer Games Championship. It's all about blasting away at the



hoodlums, gun runners and Boot-leggers who've moved into your precinct.

This is police work made simple. No endless paperwork, no stake-outs or boring collection of evidence - you just get out the old Magnum .44 (equipped with amazo sights of course) and get

blasting. The joint you bust is really jumping with hoods - six of them in all. To be fair, these guys don't have any qualms about blazing away at you. What makes things even trickier is that you're exposed on the open streets while the bad guys are all hiding behind walls and fences.



SKIMMING IN THE SHADOWS

The skimmer approaches entry lift 43 to allow the skimmer to go to the lower level. The surface defences are closing in.

Life aboard Earth megafreighter X111-7S-C50 is pretty routine stuff. The huge leviathan lumbers back and forth through space between the various trading stations, which in turn serve the far flung outposts of the great terran Galactic Empire. The few alien reaches which haven't been incorporated into the Empire as rather unequal partners have been ruthlessly exterminated.

So really, there's not a great deal to do. Fighter pilot and general all round wonderful person Mike Shadow really is kicking his heels round on of the many leisure and recreation centres, where the crew, bored out of their skulls, indulge in all manner of bizarre and highly dangerous sports just to break the monotony.

The only action out there are a few Orion pirates. But the automated ships defences take care of them, and the pirates usually try to pick on the smaller scout ships and the poor pickings of the smaller freighters further out. Just about the only time Mike gets to go for a spin in the old skimmer is when he's got to pop out to do a routine check for meteorite damage. Again, that's mostly automated, but the Captain is a bit of an odd ball and likes pilots to go out there and make double sure.

But one day, Mike's out there on routine patrol. Then he finds the site of a meteorite impact. It's a chance in a million. It would have destroyed most ships, and even the mega freighter's automated repair system is going to take some time to sort it out. As he swoops down to get a closer look

at the damage, there is a sudden blinding flash of light. Mike swerves and just avoids a stabbing laser bolt. The automated defences have come on! Mike tries to raise the local computer node, but with horror realises that it is that tangled mess of metal and meteorite debris below him. He realises that he is alone against the entire might of the megafreighter's defences. He must get back to the docking bay.

The odds look 'stacked against him. If he moves away from the surface, the laser cannon will get him. If he hugs the freighters skin, he won't get past the laser forcefields. The only hope is to use the narrow labyrinthine corridors just under the freighter's surface. The trouble is that these are the same corridors used by the defence system to feed its deadly arsenal to wherever danger threatens.

In two hundred screens of shoot-em-up action, Mike has to dodge between the surface and the inside of the ship in a bid to get back inside the ship before the automated defences swarm in. He must locate and destroy the force field generators which block his path. The defences are modeled along those of the human body, with antibodies and white cells which sense the presence of a foreign body and move towards it.

Shadowskimmer from *THE EDGE* should be around early in the new year and promises to be similar to *Uridium* but with more colour and detailed graphics, although it's flick screen rather than scrolling.

Right at the beginning of level one, and the place is swarming with criminals

To stay alive, you've got to get your shots in at just the right time, just as the bad guys break cover and try to shoot you. If you're not content with just blowing away the bad guys, there are also plenty of birds fluttering around just in case you get bored. For some reason there is also a spinning bottle flying through the air, if you can manage to shoot this down you gain immunity from bullets for a while (why shooting a bottle should give

you a bulletproof vest, only MIKROGEN know).

Each level is played against a time limit. All of the baddies must be shot before this time is up, or else it's curtains for you. There are ten levels in all, and the higher the level, the shorter the time limit. The cop is joystick controlled, and as he moves his gunsight moves with him. The sight moves slightly faster than the cop, which can make things quite tricky.

This is good harmless shoot-em-up fun, which should be ready for release around the end of the year.

PREVIEW

FRIENDS ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN

It is well known that things are pretty tough at the top. But, it isn't much fun at the bottom either. In PSS's latest strategy game, *Annals of Rome*, you are confronted with an awesome task - to forge the mighty Roman Empire no less.

The game opens in 273BC. By this time, the Romans had managed to establish a firm grip on the Italian mainland. So far, so good. But out there are 13 different races of people, all hell bent on forging for themselves an empire.

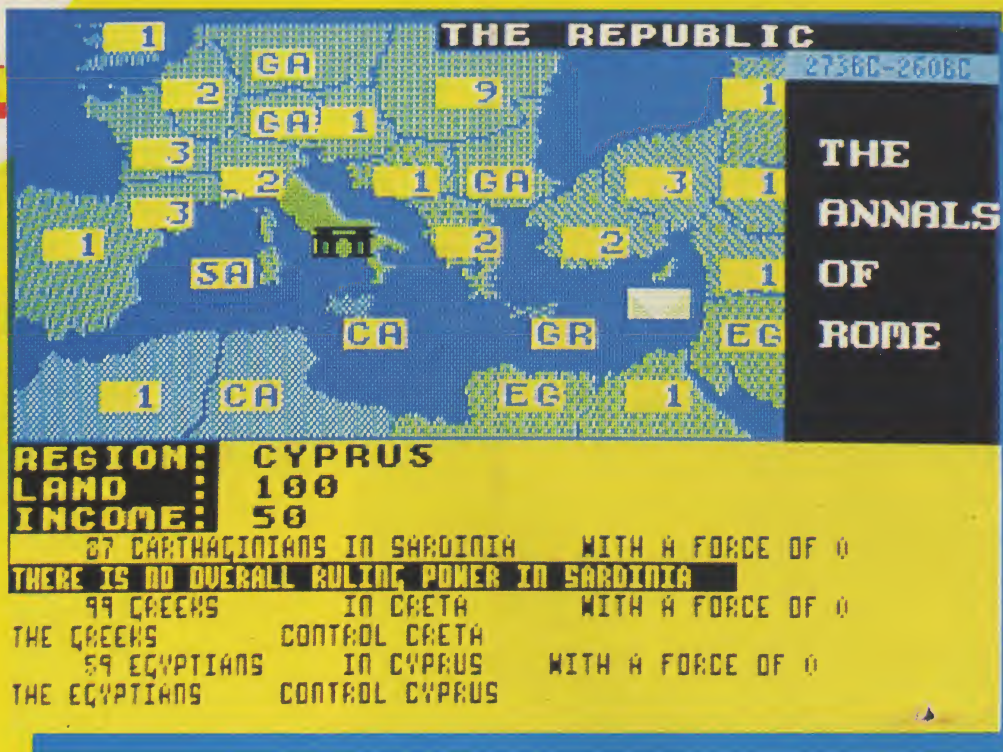
The game takes place on a map showing the ancient worlds, basically southern and central Europe and the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. You play the leader of a faction in the Roman Senate. You must decide the tax rate, consider how much money to spend on military forces, who is to command them, and where they should be deployed.

There are 21 individual commanders at your disposal of varying competence and loyalty. It is up to you to decide where to deploy your commanders to ensure success. But of course, with so many rival powers surrounding Rome, there is a constant danger of invasion, so players must try to ensure that a fair number of troops are left back in Rome to defend it against marauding Barbarians. Should an invasion succeed, and then go on

An early stage in the game. The other powers are active at the moment, fighting amongst themselves

to sack Rome, needless to say, you won't be terribly popular. Worse still, some of your commanders might decide to rebel, if they see you making a hash of things, and then civil war will break out. This makes things even worse, as men are withdrawn from the legions to try to keep order and defeat such revolutions.

Once again, PSS has come up with a new angle in strategy games. Can you build the Roman Empire, or will you too be washed away in the sands of time.



FOOTBALL CRAZY

Can you rise to the dizzy heights of football stardom, or are you destined to spend your career languishing in division four playing for the Penge Plodders?

With *Footballer of the Year* from GREMLIN GRAPHICS, you can find out if you've got what it takes to get to the top of the game. The object of the game is to win the award of "Footballer of the Year". Fortunately you don't have to make a coy, modest acceptance speech thanking your manager, your team mates, your mum and dad, your pet budgie and the office tea boy.

According to Greg Holmes, one of the programmers working on the project at GREMLIN, it is a strategy game with arcade elements. Quite a change of direction for the GREMLIN team, who are normally to be found designing games to kill and maim with. Come to think of it, it isn't really that big a step from that to a game about professional football.

To achieve your aim, you first pick the team you want to play for.

This is a bit like selecting a skill level. If you decide to play for Liverpool, then obviously you will either be a star overnight, or end up languishing on the subs bench in no time. To work your way up the scale, you must slowly develop your skills. Then, when the time is right, apply for a transfer. A scout will then turn up from another club, and if you're the sort of thing they're looking for, they'll take you.

The game is icon driven, and the player has to make a lot of decisions on what to buy to improve his skill. Skill is reflected in a rating which changes depending on your performance in various competitions. Your wages are affected by your rating and the club you're playing for, so obviously they'll go up as you move slowly up the rankings. But likewise, getting promotion and succeeding in the big clubs will cost more money.

It'll be out at the beginning of December, and will set you back £7.95.

The status screen at the beginning of the game. You've got to pile up the points to get to the top of the pile

22ND	STATE OF AFFAIRS		1 ST
21ST	GOALS SCORED THIS SEASON		2 ND
20TH			3 RD
19TH	LEAGUE 00	EUROPE 00	4 TH
18TH	L'WOOD 00	INTER 00	5 TH
17TH	FA CUP 00	TOTAL 000	6 TH
16TH	TEAMS' MORALE IS AVERAGE		7 TH
15TH	P W D L F A PTS		8 TH
14TH	00 00 00 00 00 00 00		9 TH
13TH			10TH
12TH	PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE		11TH

Crime is a disease. He's the cure.



STALLONE COBRA



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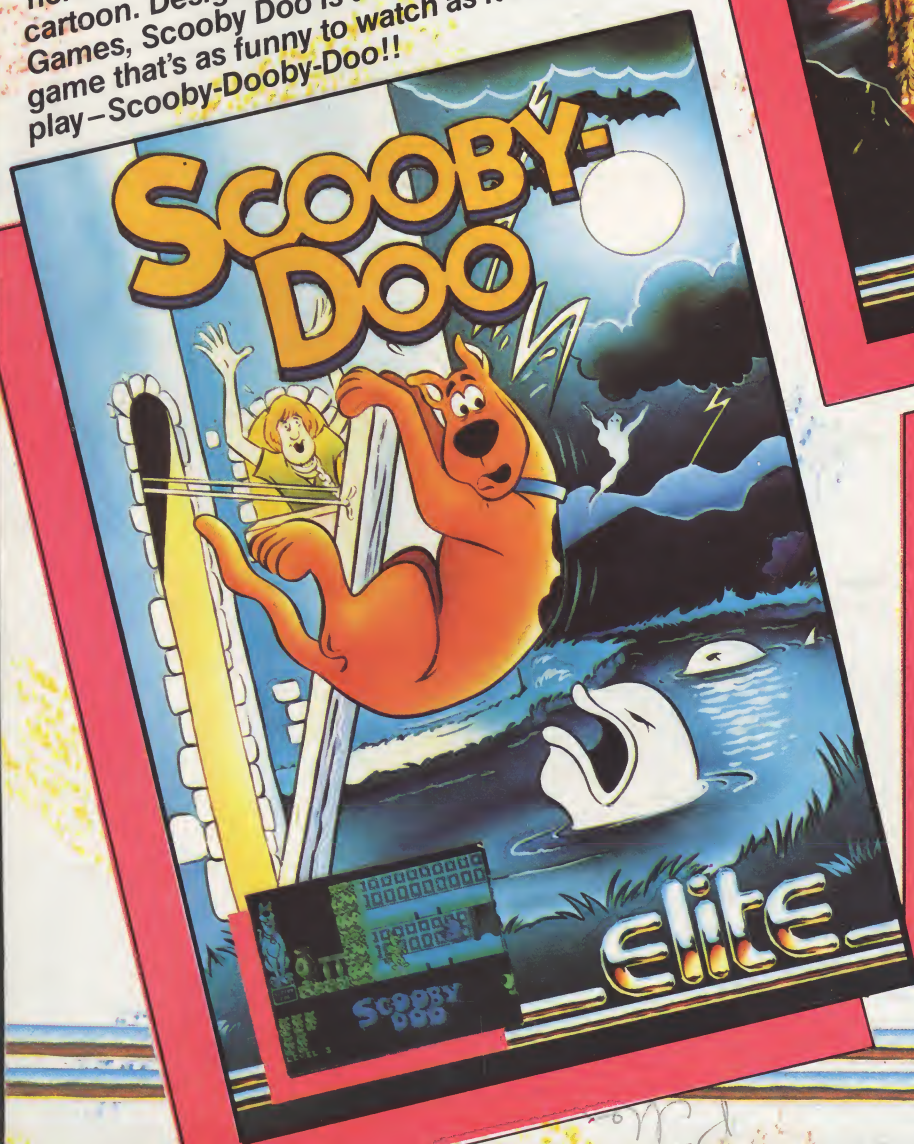
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